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DOES CHRIST STILL HEAL?

DOES CHRIST STILL HEAL?

*An Examination of the Christian View
of Sickness and a Presentation of the
Permanency of the Divine Commission
to Heal.*

BY

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TO
BISHOP BRENT

WITH DEEPEST GRATITUDE FOR THE INSPIRATION OF HIS LIFE,
HIS SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP, AND HIS PERSONAL EN-
COURAGEMENT, THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY
D E D I C A T E D

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DOES CHRIST STILL HEAL?

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PART I

INTRODUCTION: THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SICK- NESS

ONE of the deepest joys that can come into the life of a Christian is his acceptance of the Ministry of Healing. It bears with it such a revelation of new power and light that life is strengthened and enriched in every aspect. The former Christian life seems dull and almost dead in comparison. The vision is enlarged and new capacities are born. The relationship between man and God assumes a deeper reality and becomes at once more intimate as we recognize the great truth that the Nazarene is still pouring forth His healing power upon the bodies of the faithful as well as upon sin-sick souls. One reads the Gospel with new fervor, and finds upon many

pages the promise of the perpetuation of this power. They are living words, and as one investigates, he finds that these promises have been fulfilled in saintly lives in every generation since apostolic times.

Yet the most appalling fact that confronts believers in this ministry is that this great truth is accepted and practiced by so few Christian church members that one would be quite safe in saying that the church had discarded it or permitted it to languish practically to a vanishing point.

This condition is a source of deep concern to believers, for it is found to exist, not only among the laymen and women, but to a tremendous degree among the clergy—Bishops, Priests and Ministers alike; not only in all the branches of the Catholic Church (English, Roman and Eastern), but in the Protestant denominations as well. It is a source of distress, not merely because those who accept it deplore the fact that others are deprived of blessings they might easily obtain, but because this general lack of faith on so large a scale seriously hinders the operation of the ministry among the faithful by creating deadly atmospheres of unbelief.

There are millions of people who claim to be

followers of Christ, but only little groups are found, here and there, who truly believe in Him as their Healing Saviour. When the subject is introduced it is frequently looked upon even by church people as something new—a fad of the hour, perhaps. Many of the clergy view it with an indifferent tolerance, while others do not hesitate to criticize it as an innovation or a novelty quite outside the activities of the ministry. Some who take this stand defend their position by stating they mean to “stick to the Gospel,” yet they are content to stick to what is only one-half of the Gospel.

This condition is especially perplexing to the believer when he realizes that the special point of faith he is supporting is, in reality, not a novelty or any new doctrine he would fasten upon the church, but one of the very foundation stones of Christianity. It represents a definite doctrine that our Lord taught and practiced, which He told His disciples to teach and practice, and concerning the cessation of which we have no authority, scriptural or scientific.

As I faced this problem I found that it was by no means a shallow one. It is recognized, of course, that a true faith is not to be found in all

so-called Christians. We all realize that in all congregations there are cold and careless persons who do not represent Christianity, but rather *mis*-represent the Christian faith to the world. The difficulty lay far deeper. I found there were many really devout men and women, faithful in church work, and doing everything they felt was required of them as Christians, yet having no place in their life for a Healing Saviour and exercising no faith in the ministry of healing.

As I inquired into this condition I found that it was the result of a variety of peculiar theories and ideas regarding disease, which I assemble and call the "Christian View of Sickness," not because it is the true view or our Lord's view, but because these particular views, to be enumerated, are the result of a development and growth within the Church, and have been assumed, consciously and unconsciously, by the majority of those who call themselves Christians.

CHAPTER I

SICKNESS AND "SUFFERING"

PROBABLY the most firmly entrenched views of Christians is that wherein sickness is confused with "suffering." The idea undoubtedly has its origin in advice given to one undergoing intense physical suffering, to the effect that he bear his pains patiently and take comfort and courage by reminding himself of our Lord's suffering upon the cross. That idea, helpful only as an inspiring thought, found a fertile field in the minds of many of the early Christians. It developed to such a degree that many men and women who entered the religious life accustomed themselves to welcome sickness and disability as a special means whereby they might participate in the sufferings of Christ. If pains were in the hands or feet, it served to remind them of the pain He endured because of the nails. If it were in the body, the spear thrust in the side, became the center of vision. Pains in the head were easily

likened to the pangs endured by the crown of thorns. In the torments of a heavy fever, with parched and dry throat, one was to remind himself of our Lord's thirst; and when the whole body was racked with aches and weariness, one was to remember the stripes He received and His torture in bearing the cross on His shoulders until He fell fainting beneath its cruel weight on the road to Calvary.

Thus, mere physical suffering, in itself, became clothed with a character totally foreign to its real nature. It was so completely transformed by comparison with Divine sufferings, that it was exalted to a place of dignity totally unwarranted.

By many Christians pains were accepted as an opportunity by which they might participate in the sufferings of their Master, and were welcomed as bestowing a certain degree of merit and Christian character. Some saints prayed that their pain might be more intense in order that they could thus be permitted to approach more nearly our Lord's sufferings; and others refused to be relieved of pain by physicians, believing they would thus be deprived of a chance for spiritual growth.

The great majority of the devout men and women of the Church in the middle ages held this

idea and it is to be found among many devout Christians to-day. Yet it is not at all in accordance with our Lord's teaching with regard to pain and the healing of sickness. His physical suffering was not due to any disease, but was solely the result of injuries inflicted upon Him under persecution and in the approach to martyrdom. There is, therefore, only one type of physical suffering for which one would be entitled to merit, as an imitation of our Lord's patient endurance of His sufferings, and that would be the experience of a martyr, persecuted and suffering for righteousness' sake and in His name.

It is more than likely that this conception of the value of physical suffering sprung up in the minds of Christians after the last of the great persecutions. With the memory so fresh with so many martyrdoms, it was but natural that some might feel they had little opportunity to show how much they, too, would gladly suffer for our Lord. A young Christian who was seeking martyrdom during one of the persecutions was rebuked by his Bishop for so doing. It would have been well if some saintly Bishop had rebuked these seekers after pain in the middle ages and later. The principle is the same.

We can certainly see now that those who clung to their pains in an ordinary sickness or after an accident, were not only laboring under a false principle, but subjecting their imagination to real abuse. In the light of psychology and the power of auto-suggestion, the results must have been most unhappy in many instances. Patients not only retarded their recovery but by their thoughts and words even rendered their condition more serious, and their pains more intense. Saddest of all, they contributed in keeping alive this erroneous view.

To many devout natures this aspect of sickness was most alluring and, as it carried with it the usage of many pious persons and even those who were called saints, a disease was accepted as a providentially sent means of spiritual growth. In its last analysis this is a form of self-torture. Upon this principle Maturin says: "There is a strange pleasure to certain temperaments in practicing self-torture upon themselves: it is an end in itself, it reaches out toward nothing, grasps nothing higher; it is the morbid pleasure of inflicting pain upon oneself. This is one of the mysteries of nature which is impossible to understand. But such a spirit of mortification has nothing to do

with Christianity. It is to be found all over the world, and is often the source of the most dangerous form of pride." ¹

Such a view of sickness, however, was contrary, not only to our Lord's teaching, but was opposed by a few of the great teachers of the church, who possessed a larger, truer vision. Among these was St. Francis De Sales, in whose writings are to be found many evidences of his efforts to correct this unhappy tendency. So wholesome are his views on this and kindred subjects that he is frequently referred to as the "Common Sense Saint."

In writing to a Superior with regard to a young woman who was fasting to excess, he says: "She weakens her body, but meanwhile she feeds her heart with a most poisonous self-esteem and self-love. When abstinence is opposed to obedience it simply transfers what is sinful from the body to the soul. Let this person strive to control her own will, and she will soon shake off these *phantoms of piety* to which she clings with so much mere superstition. She has consecrated her physical strength to God and she has no right to ruin it."

¹ Maturin. "The Spiritual Life."

To an Abbess, he writes: "I must add on this scrap of paper one more important word of advice. Do not lay any further austerity than that which your rule imposes upon your weak body. Preserve your bodily strength the better to serve God in those spiritual exercises which we are sometimes forced to give up when we have been indiscreet in taxing the outward frame, because it must coöperate with the soul in their performance."

These extracts illustrate perfectly the principle held by St. Francis with regard to "enjoyment" of pain and excessive mortification of the body. He repeats it in various forms to many penitents and friends. To a young nun, inclined toward the imitation of Christ's suffering in her sickness, he administers this gentle but very direct rebuke: "There is no harm in saying a *Pater* for your headache, but indeed, my child, I should not have boldness to pray to our Dear Lord, "*by the pains of His Holy Head,*" to take away a headache of mine! Of a truth He bare it all that we might be spared. I would rather pray through the merits of our Lord's Crown, that I might have a crown of patience to soothe my headache."

To those who were inclined to prolong their

illness with a view toward submitting to what they thought was the visitation of God, he wrote that they were to obey the physician and take the medicine prescribed for them. From what we know of the art of the average physician in the age of St. Francis, we may have a deep sympathy for many of the patients thus admonished to obedience; but the principle which is being considered is very definitely illustrated by this common sense saint and I am confident that a study of his writings would bring much that is refreshing and sane into many one-sided, semi-darkened, Christian lives.

CHAPTER II

SICKNESS AS CHASTISEMENT

A SECOND reason for the neglect of the ministry of healing is the general misconception, so prevalent throughout the Christian world that sickness is a form of chastisement, administered by a Divine Providence as a punishment in some cases or as a necessary discipline in other cases. It is no doubt true that many diseases may be traced to a direct violation of some moral and natural law on the part of the person stricken, but there are innumerable instances where serious sickness and disease ensues through no fault whatever of the sufferers. They have broken neither moral nor physical laws. This may be observed in diseases of children, catastrophes and various epidemics, whereby innocent people are infected. Nevertheless, the mind of the average Christian traces God's hand in it, engaged as it were in some cleansing process hidden from the mind of man, but fraught with some definite purpose known only

to Himself. The Christian church has this theology firmly embedded in its system. Catholic and Protestant alike bear testimony to this teaching in their formularies, Prayer Books and extempore prayers. The really devout believers accept this with submission; others not so strong in the faith, puzzled by the apparent injustice, rebel against this doctrine. Who has not heard these words in some form or another:

“What have I done that God should make me suffer so?”

“What has this child done that God should send this sickness?”

One should note here that persons rebelling in this way are not rejecting the teaching about God. They are *accepting the teaching and finding fault with the character of God*. Thus, many persons, while remaining in the Church, lose their love for and trust in God; others lose their faith in God and in the Church, from whose teachings they received such revelation of God.

How every Christian should grieve at the thought of the multitudes of persons who have been forced away from God by this false conception! How one must grieve when he realizes that multitudes have been kept from loving God by

this false teaching—a teaching which is founded solely upon the Old Testament conception of God, which has no place in the Gospel records and is only suggested in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In this latter book there are to be found those passages with respect to the “chastening of the Lord,” upon which the theologians have laid such emphasis. Even although they were uttered by a Hebrew to Hebrews, the underlying thought is Christian, not Hebraic, and it is clearly a misinterpretation to apply them to cases of illness designated as coming from God. (This particular difficulty will be considered in full in Chapter VIII.)

CHAPTER III

THE REMEDIAL VALUE OF PAIN

THEOLOGIANs have defended this teaching by citing evidences of the remedial value of pain. "It is God's way of warning," they say; and the teaching seems very probable and satisfying so long as appropriate illustrations are presented. But the moment one starts to apply this principle in any way generally, or begins an investigation of the causes of pain, he meets so many contradictions and exceptions and finds himself so far afield, that the main argument becomes untenable and applicable only in a few specially selected cases.

In these few cases he will find that pain, following wrong doing or disobedience of a law of nature, acts as a salutary warning against a repetition of the act, and as an incentive toward proper readjustment, moral and physical. Thus the theologian could prove his case, by showing that God, because of His love, had chastised His child and,

by means of the chastisement, had won the child back to Him and strengthened him in right living. That appears so plausible and carries with it such a blessed purpose that scarcely any one could take exception.

Yet it records the first false step in this system of theology, which links God with the sending of disease and sickness.

Like every other deviation from the path of truth, the first step is apparently harmless. That is the subtlety and danger of first sins. They seem so innocent. The same is true with respect to our judgment of God's character. The moment we connect Him with the sending of disease or the infliction of physical pain, we open the way toward committing ourselves to the entire system of false theology, which for so many centuries has misrepresented Him to the world.

The basic fact upon which we must rest is that we are to accept the character of God, not as given to us by Old Testament writers, but as revealed to us by His Son. He is a God of Love; a God who cannot do evil; *who would not do evil even that good might result*. To attribute to Him the sending of disease is but to dishonor Him. Jesus recognized that disease and sickness fol-

lowed, in many instances, as a result of man's disobedience; but He taught that the author of the evil and the disease was not God, but a spirit of evil prompting man to a neglect of God's laws or a defiance of them.

The man, therefore, who turns toward God in his pain, does not do so because he has been punished by a loving Father, but because he has been struck by an enemy. God is so powerful and so good that He is ready to reach out and reclaim a child who has fallen into evil, the moment that child lifts a prayerful thought to Him. He is able to transform that evil into good. He can bring good out of evil the moment man reaches up and asks Him to do so. It is thus that he defeats the power of evil.

But to say that He sent that evil is to dishonor Him and to obscure the operations of the evil powers within man's heart, as well as the evil influences without. Such a theory also confers upon sickness or pain, a virtue it does not possess and which is totally foreign to its true nature.

We encounter a very serious obstacle the moment we bestow upon sickness such high character. We should not overlook the fact that the same

pain or disease, by which one man might be brought back to a God fearing life, might be the means by which another poor sinner might be sent unconscious and unshriven into eternity. Where would there be any evidence of God's loving kindness in the latter case?

Another serious obstacle is the unpleasant fact that pain and sickness are not always remedial, even though they follow as the direct result of a personal sin. Frequently it has just the opposite effect of hardening the heart and creating even a wider breach between the soul of man and God.

In other respects, also, we see a great lack of uniformity in the infliction of the pain or disease. Two persons may break the same physical and moral law. One may be visited by a serious illness because of the infraction; the other may escape without the slightest physical ill-effects. As a result of an over-indulgence in alcohol, one person might be made so deadly ill that he would be several days in recovering. Another person would be but slightly stimulated. Under such influence one man would become morally irresponsible and fall into the deadliest of sins; another would not be moved to evil-doing with twice the amount. The same lack of uniformity may be

seen in almost every department of life, and with respect to almost every sin man may commit. When Christian theologians therefore speak so readily of God's hand in punishment and chastisement, they do not realize what a fitful and utterly capricious character they are conferring upon the Deity.

The only answer that has been presented to meet this dilemma is the Roman doctrine of Purgatory. In this, the theory is advanced that all persons, even converted Christians, must experience a certain amount of suffering. Saints who suffer here on earth are to be spared purgatorial pains, while sinners who escape suffering here have much horrible punishment to undergo hereafter.

That saints may suffer in a manner which, in a certain sense, may be said to be "according to the will of God," one cannot deny, but it is an entirely different kind of suffering from sickness. It is a suffering they undergo because of *their* determination to do God's will. It is contrary to His will that this suffering is inflicted upon them. He does not send it. He gives them strength to bear it; comfort in their deepest agony and even provides the miracle of joy!

CHAPTER IV

THE SUFFERING OF THE INNOCENT

ANOTHER phase of the question that must have consideration is the fact that many people suffer great agonies and from serious diseases through no fault of their own. They do not deliberately break any law of nature, they do not commit sin; yet many suffer and many die merely because some one else has been careless, ignorant or grasping, or has sinned through failure to perform a duty. A person may bring much serious illness upon innocent people by neglect of his observance of certain, simple, sanitary laws. An official of the Board of Health may contribute directly by his failure to enforce these laws or by laxity in the inspection of milk, food and water supply. A grasping or careless dealer may cause untold harm by selling impure or highly adulterated provisions. When babies and other innocent persons are poisoned and suffer because of these things, I fail to discern the hand of God

in any act of chastisement. Even though the cause may not be known, it is an empty mockery for any one to attribute the illness to the hand of God or to refer to the death as the working out of God's purpose for some good, to be realized later perhaps. It is not the will of God that is being done, or that has been done, but clearly something that is *contrary to His will*.

Men and women who are abreast of the times these days have been compelled to modify their theological views considerably by reason of the tremendous revelations of the pioneers in the field of sanitation and hygiene. Modern Health Boards have been able to lower death rates in many communities. Prof. C. E. A. Winslow, Director of the New York State Department of Health, stated in a recent article in *The Constructive Quarterly* that there were over a half a million preventable deaths in the United States each year. He quotes the conservative estimate of the Committee of 100 on Conservation of National Vitality, that 40 per cent. of the million and a half deaths which occur in this country annually could be prevented by the application of the knowledge of hygiene and sanitation which we now possess. Sanitary administration and education, he

pointed out, have reduced infant mortality, for instance, in New York City, from a rate of 144 per thousand births in 1907, to 94 in 1914. Two years' effort in the state reduced the rate from 127 to 97. The point of view on this matter is expressed by Dr. Holt:

"Does God fix the death rate? Once men were taught so, and death was regarded as an act of Divine Providence, often inscrutable. We are now coming to look upon a high infant mortality as evidence of human weakness, ignorance and cupidity. We believe that providence works through human agencies and that in this field, as in others, we reap what we sow—no more and no less."

Communicable diseases of children, like scarlet fever, measles, whooping-cough and diphtheria, needlessly carry off 40,000 a year. The death rate from typhoid fever has been decreased from 46 to 16 per 100,000 in two decades. Two-thirds of 150,000 deaths in a year from tuberculosis should be prevented.

"What earthly father, however ungodly and unloving, would inoculate his child with a disease like tuberculosis or cancer as a punishment? Yet this, it seems, is the kind of punishment which many Christians imagine our Heavenly Father in-

flicts upon His children. Is not such an idea, to say the least, *dishonoring to God*. Can we think of our Lord going about imparting disease to those to whom He ministered? The very thought is impossible.”¹

God permits sickness and adversity and disease as He also permits sin. *But disease is no more an expression of the will of God than sin is the will of God.*

This subject of God’s will with respect to sickness and suffering and the misconceptions that have grown around it, will be expanded later.

Many pure and innocent women have been infected with most serious disease by profligate husbands. Such victims committed no sin, were partakers in no sin with others, and had broken no law of nature. As one views such cases as these, and they are by no means rare, can any one with a rational mind attribute the suffering to the will of God or charge Him with having sent it for a purpose? On the contrary, may not we trace with unerring swiftness, and a certainty not to be denied, a distinct power of evil at work, spreading abroad the consequences of sin?

Why have not these innocent ones been cured,

¹“Healing in the Church,” by J. M. Hickson.

since their suffering is not the result of any sin or wrongdoing on their part? This presents a grave problem and we often encounter it in the person of some really good man or woman who suffers long with a disease. The vast majority of the people continue to suffer physical ills because they believe that God has sent them and that it is His will for them. The very moment this idea takes root in the heart, and it is rooted deeply in many Christian hearts, it practically *inhibits any exercise of faith* in prayer for recovery.

"There is one thing we know God cannot do. He cannot save us either in body or in soul if *we* do not will to be saved. If we do not accept the salvation He offers us for our bodies, He will not force it upon us. He cannot force it upon us. He has made us creatures of free will, and therefore He can only do for us what we allow Him to do. If we hug our bodily infirmities in the belief that this is a 'cross' sent by God for us to bear, how can God deliver us from it? We have neither desired nor asked deliverance; and Christ has not promised to give us what we do not ask for. The answer to prayer is strictly conditioned by our belief in God's will and power to grant what we ask.

The 'prayer of faith' cannot surely be prayed by one who is sure neither of God's will, nor of His power to give. Our Lord has plainly told us 'whatsoever thing ye ask in prayer believing ye shall receive.' " 2

² J. M. Hickson, "Healing in the Church."

CHAPTER V

THE ESCAPE OF THE WICKED

THERE is still another phase we must consider if we would be fair and look at the subject from all sides. It is one which will cause many of us to ponder and to be less free with reference to sickness as God's chastisement. Briefly it is this:

There are many of the grossest sins against God and against our neighbor that are not visited by sickness or bodily disorder. It is possible for a person to break every one of the Ten Commandments and yet escape physical disability of any kind. A man may be a thief and yet live to a comfortable old age, with never a thought of restitution, while the wayward boy may meet a violent death in the performance of his first act of wrongdoing. Can we say that it was God's hand that cut the young man off in the midst of his sin? Unthinkingly the average theologian says, "yes." But viewed comparatively,

and with some respect to the tenderness, mercy and infinite compassion of God, the rational person refuses to lay the taking-off to the hand of God in punishment.

Many persons have long since revolted against that form of religious teaching, so prevalent in all churches until a generation ago, and still a fixture in the minds of many Christians, that the reason the boy was drowned or the child hurt was due to its disobedience of the parents' command and that the accident was a punishment. It is, of course, a simple process to trace the accident or resultant sickness or injury of *certain cases* directly to the act of disobedience, but my mind refuses to follow, when one connects the hand of God with that punishment. What human father, however brutal, would think of causing his boy's death by drowning simply because he went swimming against his wishes? Or what mother would inflict a disease like pneumonia upon her daughter because she would not follow her admonitions to dress warmly? Yet it has been a commonplace for men and women to lay to God's account such acts. Exponents of this form of theology do not seem to take into account the fact that many really unruly boys, who disobey and dishonor par-

ents daily, are never drowned and many willful and wayward girls escape pneumonia and other kindred ills.

Some one may charge us with conferring an unwarranted dignity upon these incidents of juvenile delinquency by associating them with this argument, yet they belong here, and, moreover, they fittingly illustrate that type of theology which has brought the Christian Church into disrepute, and rendered its teachings in this respect absurd and unreal. Furthermore, many children themselves are quick, as they grow older, to detect the fallacies in this theology and so grow up to disregard entirely the hand of God in the affairs of men. Eventually there ensues a lack of belief in God *in any particular*, and all because of the cruel, inhuman theology that has been imparted to the child mind. I have often wondered how many children there might be, who, nursed in this theology, found themselves at weaning time, healthy little atheists!

I have met many persons thus nurtured who have known God only as a cruel and capricious Being and so, they merged from adolescence, have promptly rejected Him. They reached a point where they could no longer retain respect for

a Being reported to operate on a plane so far below the level of common, human justice. Phrases like the "Father's will," and the "mysterious ways of Providence," in connection with sudden deaths of good men and women through accident, in which notorious evil-doers escaped unscathed, finally became intolerable; and so the connection was severed with the Church where these things were taught. It is a beautiful experience to reveal a God of love to such persons for the first time. They are much more easily converted to the real active life of Christianity than those within the Church, who are still enmeshed in the deadly web of the old theology.

So one might go through a long list of heinous sins, which even the State classifies as crimes, and find that many guilty persons suffer no serious physical result. In some cases we see that these sins interfere with the digestive organs because of the nervous strain caused by wrongdoing, yet there are many notorious evil-doers who do not worry at all over their depredations. It is true that all sins have the effect of deforming the character of man, hardening his heart and even producing capacity for deeper sin; but these penalties

have nothing to do with the subject of physical illness or disease. We simply are confronted by the fact that as far as the physical being is concerned there is, in many instances, apparently an immunity from sickness and disease. To apply the doctrinal answer that some great catastrophe or illness will overtake them before they die, is to hazard a wild guess. We may frequently observe that nothing of the kind happens.

Following these considerations, step by step, we are now face to face with a God who either does not see all evil, or a capricious God who will at times punish most horribly a single erring step and, for some mysterious reason of His own, withhold punishment from the hardened criminal. When this is honestly faced, *honestly thought out*, such a false conception of God will be forever banished from the mind, and the soul of man will get a *new* and indeed a *true vision of God*.

This was the problem that confronted the writer of the 73rd Psalm. He saw all that we are describing and the depth of the problem was too deep for him to comprehend:

"I was grieved at the wicked: I do also see the ungodly in such prosperity.

For they are in no peril of death, but are lusty and strong.

They come into no misfortune like other folk: neither are they plagued like other men.

And this is the cause that they are so holden with pride: and overwhelmed with cruelty.

Their eyes swell with fatness and they do even what they lust."

.

"Tush, say they, how should God perceive it: is there knowledge in the Most High?

Lo, these are the ungodly, these prosper in the world, and these have riches in possession: and I said, Then have I cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency."

.

"Then thought I to understand this: but it was too hard for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God: then understood I the end of these men."

The man of God who wrote these lines did not parade his doubts and then, unable to solve them, lay the blame upon God. He took them to God. He wrestled with them in the sanctuary. He placed himself in the presence of God, and it was there that he received his answer and was granted the solution of his problem. His perplexities vanished as God revealed to him His power and

glory, and "he was enabled to realize the transitoriness of the prosperity of the wicked, and their nothingness in the sight of God." With the granting of this vision the Psalmist is quick to confess his former error and impatience: "So foolish was I and ignorant: even as a beast before Thee."

The persistence with which this difficulty occurs in Christian thinking and Christian writing even to this day is a matter requiring serious attention. The principle involved is the same. It is a false theology and a presumptuous indictment of God's neglect, fashioned only upon the standards of worldly judgment. In treating of the Psalm, Kirkpatrick¹ states: "The double problem of the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous weighed heavily on the minds of many in ancient Israel, who *only knew of this world* as the scene of God's dealings with men, and missed the clear evidence of God's sovereign justice, which they desired to see in the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked. . . . In this Psalm the problem is approached from the side of the prosperity of the wicked.

¹ Kirkpatrick. "The Book of Psalms."

It represents a deeper and probably later stage of thought; the difficulty has become more acute, and the solution is more complete; for the Psalmist is led to recognize not only the instability of worldly greatness, but the supreme blessedness of fellowship with God as man's highest good. . . . A further step is made towards the conclusion implicitly contained in the faith in this Psalm, that *this world* is but *one act* in the great drama of life."

As the problem is presented simply and clearly, so the way which leads to the solution is pointed out with like clearness. It lies not in keen analysis, clever human judgment or a blind acceptance of God's mysterious movements, but in a quiet, trustful waiting upon God. Men may present this problem to us but they cannot supply the answer. It is to be obtained only *by each individual soul in communion with God*.

" 'Until I went into the Sanctuary of God: then understood I their end.' This is evidently no theology, hammered out by human argument and the prize of the battle of tongues. It is a strong immutable conviction wrought in the prophet's mind

by the action of spirit upon spirit; it is a genuine revelation by God Himself to the troubled but seeking soul of the worshiper." ²

² Hephner. "The Fellowship of Silence."

CHAPTER VI

THE FICTITIOUS VALUE OF DISEASE

IN spite of all the arguments that have been presented, there will be some who are so loth to part with the old theology that they will point to the beautiful lives of many Christians who have suffered severely through illness and who seem to have been strengthened and developed thereby. It is true that a number of these cases may be found. One cannot dispute the fact. A grave difficulty, however, is seen in the inclination of some people to produce only that evidence which supports their argument. It is remarkable how persons will present that one side and continue to disregard utterly the innumerable instances where sickness and disease have not strengthened and beautified the character, but, on the contrary, have warped it, embittered it, and turned the soul away from God in despair.

It is true that many fine characters continue to develop in spiritual progress while suffering some

form of physical pain or through confinement, brought about by deformity. In the consideration of such a character we must note:

It is not by virtue of the pain, nor through the value of the deformity that they develop and grow. It is in spite of it.

It is a demonstration that where the heart of man is truly turned toward God, any physical evil that may come may be not only robbed of its power to embitter or destroy character and faith, but may be used as a stepping stone to a sweeter, stronger character and a higher faith. THIS IS THE VINDICATION OF THE POWER OF GOD OVER THE POWER OF EVIL.

God has not sent the evil to bring about the strengthening. The evil has fallen through some cause or from some source that is contrary to His will for man. He is therefore present with a power greater than that of the evil power, to minister to man's needs, if man will but look to Him and appropriate that power. It is an evidence of the superiority of God over evil, which may be traced step by step from the slightest accident to a violent death, through martyrdom. It is an illustration of the ultimate triumph of the power of God over the power of evil, whether

it come from man or from the power of darkness.

The true principle is that God is so great; His power so wonderful and easy of access, that any one who fully accepts Him may turn an accident or a misfortune or a deformity, into a means of doing good in other ways. Thus that which would spell ruin and disaster and utter desolation to many without God, could be utilized as a special opportunity for service to those who possess God.

Even the most enthusiastic defender of the theory that God sends trouble, will admit that those persons who take misfortune cheerfully and turn it to good advantage, constitute a very small percentage of the afflicted ones. The average cripple and chronic sufferer is a sour, unpleasant character with little or no kindly feeling toward God or man; nor can he be brought to the point where he will adjust himself to his changed conditions and take advantage of new opportunities. That misfortune which a Christian theorist bids him accept as an opportunity, he rejects as a hindrance.

If, therefore, the principle were true, that God had sent the trouble for purpose of education and development and for giving larger vision, it would be seen in the vast majority of cases that His plan had failed. He would have bestowed

upon man that sorrow and pain which had brought about the downfall of his character, and had even driven him away from his loving Father. Viewed from this standpoint, we could hardly pass upon such a system of education as intelligent.

Aside from its theological defect, there is certainly no possibility of commending the plan from a humanitarian standpoint. Let the question be put frankly and met honestly.

What unkindness on the part of God it would reveal, for Him to take such cruel means even to produce a good! Can we in this day conceive of Him doing evil, causing physical pain, that good may come? How limited we would consider His resources, how inhuman His plan of salvation!

A young woman who desired to be anointed for a serious illness that seized her, was much disturbed because her minister said that while he was very willing to anoint her, she must understand that it might perhaps be God's will that she did not recover her health. She felt she could not accept the anointing under that condition, as she felt it would be dealing with an uncertainty and would be obstructing her faith. The rector endeavored to meet her difficulty by citing

the case of Bishop Schereschensky, of China, whose wonderful achievements under great difficulties we all know, and stating that his life showed how much more was done by his continued affliction than could have been done had he been cured. "If the Bishop had not suffered with his paralysis," he said, "he would in all probability have spent his time traveling about China and never have begun to accomplish the good which he did by his translations and his wonderful example."

A reply of this character is likely to inspire the average hearer as conclusive, as it conforms so accurately to the popular mode of theological thought. It carries with it what seems like piety and humility, but which is not. Coming from a minister in the Church, it is endowed with additional weight in that he is credited with knowing the ways of God. So to many, while such a presentation seems unanswerable, it is far from satisfactory.

The fallacy in an explanation of this nature lies in the fact that the argument is based upon pre-supposition only. There is no way of presenting proof, or offering a basis for the exercise of an intelligent faith, and it draws a general conclusion

from a particular case. It is a fallacy of unwarranted assumption, and is a clearly defined illustration of what is known in logic as the fallacy of *non sequitur*.

The implication is that because a great work for God was carried on by a man suffering a misfortune, that the misfortune was brought about by God in order that His will be done in this special work. To which we reply:

God did not need the fine example of the great patience and Christian fortitude of the Bishop so badly that He insisted upon inflicting him with paralysis. Nor after this illness fell upon him did God refuse to have it removed because it would have interfered with His purpose. God did not want the Chinese Bible so intensely that He changed the whole course of a Bishop's life and kept him bound and confined in crippled form in order to secure it!

As we contemplate such a procedure we would be compelled to say again: How limited His resources, how inhuman His plan of salvation!

Let us contemplate the great underlying truth in this special point.

One who seeks to explain problems through such faulty theology and such fallacious logic, ig-

nore the innumerable cases of men whose misfortune rendered them hopeless and so brought to an end their capacity for doing any good, even in a small way.

He also ignores the fact that translations and other literary works requiring great patience, and incessant toil at the desk, are not always produced by cripples or those who are physically unfitted for outdoor work. I knew a dear old saint now in his ninety-first year who has not known a day of sickness for fifty years. Hale and vigorous during all the ripest years of his life, he has preferred to give up the active ministry of a parish and devote himself to sacred writing of an analytical character requiring the greatest patience and intense application and research.

The great underlying truth of the whole problem is that God does not want *things*; He wants *men*—surrendered men—whole-heartedly consecrated to His service and His will in no matter what sphere of life, in no matter what state of earthly fortune or misfortune. When He gets men thus completely, they will supply all the things necessary for the further extension of His Kingdom and the strengthening of all those who are already members.

God wanted the best that Bishop Schereschensky could give and the Bishop started giving it. When the misfortune overtook him he was so consecrated to God that he was able to go on and do great things. Instead of feeling that his life work had been interrupted, he transformed his earthly misfortune into an *opportunity* for performing wonderful service of a different character for God.

Thus this case is not a revelation of God's will for man, nor an instance of His plan of operation in producing results. It is rather a revelation of his Infinite resources, of the vindication of His power; and that the capacities of man consecrated to Him are unlimited. It is an evidence of the strong things of the world being confounded by the weak in Christ Jesus. It is a demonstration of the great truth, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." I St. John iv:4.

Once this great truth is grasped, practically all the perplexities and distressing problems attached to this faulty form of thinking and illogical reasoning will disappear, and the whole Christian world will discard its erroneous, outworn theology on the subject, and emerge into the light, to the honor of God and to the glory of His Son, Jesus of Nazareth.

CHAPTER VII

THE MISINTERPRETATION OF THE MIRACLES OF HEALING

A THIRD cause of the failure of the Church to present the subject of healing or to carry it out is seen in the almost universal misinterpretation of the miracles. These acts of healing on the part of our Lord continue to furnish never-ending texts and subjects for sermons in all churches, but only in very rare instances do we hear them treated in any but a purely spiritual sense. In a sermon upon the healing of the leper it is a common-place to hear the preacher finally refer to leprosy as "the type of sin." Likewise in the curing of the blind, the lesson is shifted to the subject of "our spiritual blindness." When our blessed Lord heals the dumb, the deaf and the crippled, the preacher will lay due emphasis only upon those who are "dumb in singing His praises," "deaf to His word and teaching," "crippled and distorted by sin." It is Christ's touch that will cleanse us; it is His word that will give us spiritual sight.

This is helpful of course; it is normally satisfying, but it is misleading to a dangerous degree, for the real facts of the healing act are lost sight of in the wealth of simile and metaphor which is used so unsparingly and with so little warrant. Preacher and hearer alike may believe in the reality of the miracle as Christ performed it, but they *limit its physical character to that period*. The only permanent value it possesses for them is its ability to provide a distinctly *spiritual* message. Its application as far as present day needs are concerned is not literal but figurative only.

It is this distinct misinterpretation of the miracles of our Lord by devout minds, that has been one of the most powerful causes of the neglect of the ministry of healing in the Church. Many of those who contributed to this neglect did so all unconsciously, but nevertheless powerfully, in proportion to their position in the Church and their reputation for devout living, and their professed knowledge of sacred theology.

In a book, "The Miracles of Jesus,"¹ for many years considered one of the foremost authorities on the subject, the author thus comments upon the

¹ "The Miracles of Jesus," by the Rt. Rev. C. G. Lang, Bishop of Stepney.

miracle performed upon the man sick of the palsy:

"The man may be taken as typical—not only of many individuals—but of society as a whole. There is a widespread moral impotence, whose root cause is the want of any serious sense of sin and the failure to deal with it honestly. *It is the palsy of the conscience.*"

Practically all of the miracles of healing are treated in the same manner by the author. The great fact of our Lord's healing power is obscured by the spiritual aspect that is thus emphasized.

Again, how completely hidden is the act of mercy in the restoration of sight to the blind man by the roadside:

"Blind and begging Bartimæus is a type of humanity in need of light. . . . He is a beggar and my spiritual blindness beggars me. . . . What is the kind of light for which our spirit cries? Plainly it must be a sight possible to human eyes. It is our human spirit that needs illumination." ²

This form of treatment represents an extreme mystical school which, while it may be innocent and agreeable ecclesiastically, is in reality very

² Rt. Rev. C. G. Lang. *Ibid.*

dangerous intellectually, for it obscures the true character of our Lord's work and power with regard to bodily healing. It directs the mind to contemplate these acts as *types* and *symbols* for our spiritual guidance; and when once this form of speculation is acquired there is practically no limit to the variety of interpretations. This school, pious as it was at first, has, during its growth of centuries, led many faithful Christians far afield, and to it may be traced the spiritualistic belief that the miracles of our Lord were not physical after all, but were related of Him as types, to form the basis of spiritual life. In fact they are treated as if they possessed a character similar to that of the parables.

Those who have allied themselves to this school forget that our Lord Himself used metaphor and simile in profusion. No more striking instance of these forms of rhetoric or of this method of symbolic teaching are to be found, than are recorded of Him; yet He also spoke plainly in words shorn of all symbolism, and he also acted plainly in demonstrating that there is a certain Divine power which men may appropriate and exercise for bodily welfare.

To interpret the acts of healing as spiritual.

symbols therefore is to do violence to His teaching, His work and His power, and to discredit the permanent value of His message.

Archbishop Trench, in his well-known book, "The Miracles of Our Lord," is eminently fair in his literal treatment of the vast majority of the miracles of healing. In his footnotes, however, of which there are a great profusion, there are to be found many extracts from prelates and scholars of various centuries, who adhere rather closely to the symbolic school. On the miracle of Christ stilling the tempest the following is presented from Tertullian:

"But that little ship presented a figure of the church, in that she is disquieted *in the sea*, that is in the world, *by the waves*, that is by persecutions and temptations, the Lord patiently sleeping as it were, until roused at last by the prayers of the saints, He checks the world and restores tranquillity to His own." Constant contact with this attractive form of speculative theology had its effect even upon Archbishop Trench for, after quoting a symbolic passage from St. Augustine, he himself says (p. 159): "We shall do no wrong to the literal truth of this and other of Christ's miracles, by recognizing the character at once

symbolic and prophetic, which many of them also bear, and this among the number. The sea is evermore in Scripture, the symbol of the restless and sinful world" . . . "and the Church of Christ has ever resembled this tempested bark, the waves of the world raging horribly around it, yet never prevailing to overwhelm it—and this because Christ is in it; who, roused by the cry of His servants, rebukes these winds and these waters, and delivers His own from their distress."

Thus the great fact of our Lord's power over the natural elements, His perfect knowledge and control of natural laws, is hidden in the symbolism constructed by fertile minds with a pious bias in that direction. Our Lord did not intend that act of stilling the tempest to be prophetic or symbolic, nor did He intend any of His miracles of healing to be so taken. They were performed as evidences of the power inherent in perfect man; of the superiority of the spiritual over the physical, and as examples of what any man could do who likewise perfected himself in the fullness and stature that God intended.

Jesus was truly the Son of God, yet He never claimed Divine help, nor used it excepting as it could be claimed and used through His manhood.

He surrendered His will perfectly to God and lived in constant communion with Him. Consequently He was endowed with a knowledge of spiritual and natural law that rendered Him almost omnipotent. This was the secret of His power. It may be realized by men in proportion as they follow His example in surrender to and in communion with God. Our Lord did not consider His example prohibitive with respect to these acts or this knowledge. He Himself said "Greater works than these shall ye do."

The miracles were great, literal facts, hard facts which had to do with the physical world and the physical side of man's nature; great facts which revealed the existence of spiritual laws and the wonderful results of their effect upon the material and physical plane in proportion to man's faith and his coöperation with the will of God.

When Jesus desired to use symbolic teaching he did it in examples of unequaled beauty and strength, in the parables and in innumerable minor illustrations and allusions. He is the "Bread from Heaven," "The Good Shepherd," "The King's Son," "The Servant," "The Master of the House." The Church is a "Grain of Mustard Seed," a little "Lump of Leaven," a "Net Full of

Fishes," a field of "Garnered Wheat." With this wealth of imagery, which He gave us for use in its proper place and at the proper time, we certainly have not the slightest ground upon which to stand, in defending the symbolic interpretation of the miracles. One might as well paint an apple or stain a peach and with about the same disastrous results. Certainly the appearance is changed and the usefulness impaired if not entirely destroyed.

Plainly the miracles were performed by our Lord for every other purpose than for symbolic teaching, and to so interpret them is to strip them of their meaning for the whole man, and to rob them of their real value. It is to denature them and render them impotent as acts for man's use to-day in the physical world. Such treatment is not only without warrant but it distorts the full Gospel message by spiritualizing that which is by nature not spiritual; and it has worked serious harm in ignoring the great facts of the body of man and his relation to the physical world.

In spite of his sympathy with this school, Archbishop Trench's book is remarkably free from strong bias on the subject and in some of the miracles no evidence of this treatment appears at all.

Not all writers, however, have preserved this balance or escaped this danger. Many editors and writers of commentaries have fallen victims to this school so completely that they see nothing but symbolism in any of the miracles. This is especially true with respect to the writers and compilers of "Pulpit Commentaries," "Outlines for Homilies," "Outlines for Sermons," "Helps to Meditation," etc., etc.

The following exposition is taken from one of the best known of pulpit commentaries. One may find similar material in almost any of the books of this character. The comment is upon Christ's testimony concerning St. John Baptist and His message to the disciples:

"Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them." St. Matt. XI : 4, 5. Thus the author expands the meaning:

"1. The blind receive their sight. The natural mind left to itself is in darkness ere the Eternal Word, conceived in the soul as a noble ointment, purifies the vision. Spittle and clay used. Spittle is the soul and clay is the body.

"2. The lame walk. Affections are the feet of the mind, which when freed from the weight of sin and from the mind of sensuality, walk on to perfection in doing good works.

"3. The lepers are cleansed. Sin is cleansed. The leprosy of pride, covetousness, sensuality.

"4. The deaf hear. Spiritual deafness flows from an undue love of temporal things.

"5. The dead are raised up. Spiritual death flows from mortal sin.

"6. The poor have the gospel preached. Poor in temporal things, who by bodily abstinence have formed their wills to entire submission to God's will."

I earnestly wish to call the attention of the reader at this point to the fact that I am not merely criticizing a certain school of thought, or a method of theological interpretation, because I do not happen to approve of it. I am presenting it as an illustration of what is by far the most general and the most popular mode of treating the miracles of the New Testament, not only in our Church but in all the denominations and by many evangelists and missionaries.³

³One of the famous sermons of "Billy" Sunday, the evangelist, is upon the word of our Lord to the man with the withered

Thus for centuries the minds of Christians generally have been alienated from a literal contemplation of the healing miracles because of the beautiful, spiritual, moral, and metaphorical lessons that have been drawn from them. Such sermonizing gradually altered the thought of the entire Christian world on the subject. Only here and there do we find exceptions. Congregations grew to take it for granted that the miracles of healing were limited to our Lord's life and perhaps the first few years of Christianity; that the continuation of the power was not even to be considered, and that their value for present day use was but to furnish a comforting spiritual message. Thus not only the minds of church members, but the mode of thought of Christian

hand in the temple at Capernaum: "Stretch forth thy hand." The exposition is upon the marvelous mechanism of the hand, its power to create and build and the exhortation is to stretch it forth in doing of good works, giving money, helping a neighbor and in active Christian duties. The physical significance of the miracle and the hostility it produced among the priests of the temple, as an act of healing, are not touched upon and, of course, are lost in the call to active helpfulness. This application may, of course, be of benefit, but it does not comprise true Gospel teaching. The significance of the act, the principle our Lord brought out, and the teaching He conveyed are ignored. Hearers thus carelessly instructed may never acquire the full understanding of the incident even in their later reading.

priests and ministers themselves, was deflected from the principles of truth. *While preachers gave the message in this over-dressed form, it must be remembered that it was so obtained by them from scholars and teachers under whom they studied, and from books which were provided them as guides and authorities.*

There is, perhaps, no more deadly obstacle to the revival of the gift of healing than this condition. Because it is so innocent and seemingly harmless, because it has such a pious aspect, and because it seems to carry the approval of so many devout souls, it has a tremendous grip upon the minds of the clergy. Even in the Seminaries and among modern scholars it has sympathetic hearing and support. In spite of the exaggeration of bodily healing by Christian Science, and the great success of the cult, it will take a generation or more to release Christians generally from their false theories and really *un-Christian* beliefs on the subject. Nor will the Church be entirely free from this unhappy mode of thought and the mistaken preaching of her teachers, until many of the old, and not a few of the modern commentaries, have been transferred from the library shelf to the museum.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHASTISEMENT OF THE LORD

THE Scripture passages upon which the unfortunate doctrine of the chastening hand of God are based are to be found in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Several portions have been used but the sixth verse is most largely quoted and forms the central thought: "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." This idea for centuries has permeated the Christian thought with respect to sickness, grief, and evil happenings of all kinds, and appears so frequently in printed prayers and in spoken admonitions that it has grown to become an orthodox Christian precept. Men who have the name and fame of being scholars have been caught in the meshes of the traditional interpretation and have lent the weight of their support in strengthening and maintaining the error. When practically all the commentaries present the same

interpretation, it is little wonder that the clergy as a class hold fast to it.

The following extract is taken from one of the best known commentaries (Sadler's). It is perhaps the one most largely used and represents the general character of the interpretation of others:

"Hebrews XII:5. 'My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him.' This teaches us that we are to take every distress or persecution as a rebuke from God. A rebuke in the sense of bringing to mind something in our past life, or something in our interior life which requires forgiveness or acknowledgment or correction."

There are many innocent people who have suffered grievously through the sins and faults of others, and a statement such as the above from a minister has caused many of them to lose their faith in the kind of a God being revealed. So much for the distress. As for the persecution, how could a true Christian be brought to believe that any persecution he was receiving could be other than from man. God does not persecute even the sinner and He certainly would not be responsible for the persecution being suffered by one of His servants for righteousness sake. *Such*

a thought is directly contrary to the teaching of Christ. It cannot be harmonized by any means with the principles of the Gospel or the words of Christ. "Blessed are ye," He said, "when *men* shall revile you and persecute you." . . . "For so persecuted *they* the prophets which were before you." Surely nothing there about the punishment of a disciple *by the Father*.

Nor is physical punishment threatened for those who sin or are undeserving. Christ said of His Father: "He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." "He sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust," and He exhorts His followers to the same attitude that they "may be the children of the Highest." (St. Luke VI : 35. Compare also St. Matt. v : 43 ff.)

The commentary already referred to offers the following in explanation of verse 6 of the same chapter (Heb. XII) : "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. One Christian said to another, 'my brother, God must love you very much if He brings all this upon you.' Now this is literally true. It is hard to believe at the time when we are overwhelmed, but it is literally and actually true, and its truth is abundantly manifested by the conduct of God toward His Incarnate Son; for what

son of God ever endured such pains of body or such distress of mind?"

Practically all the Commentaries bring out these points and present this interpretation. Some are not so severe as others but all agree. Westcott, for instance, says: "The sufferings of the Hebrews were relatively slight: and all sufferings *which come from God are the wise discipline of a Father.*"

Before a general reply to the above passage is presented the reader is asked to note, in the extracts quoted, how the issue is shifted from the sickness or pain being borne by a Christian, to the sufferings of Christ upon the cross. This is the fallacy in the whole system and it will be expanded in its proper order. It gains credence and finds ready acceptance because it comes from ministers of God, and also because the mind of the average patient is unable to perceive that there is no logical connection between disease and a death by martyrdom; especially when a suffering Saviour is set up as an example.

I. Not True to the Context

The answer to this false theology, which has wrought so much harm, is, in the first place, that

it is based on a misinterpretation of Scripture. Furthermore, this misinterpretation does violence to the context. The twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews expands the principle of courageous perseverance in faith presented in the eleventh chapter. It is a call to the Hebrew Christians to emulate in their Christian calling the example of those who suffered persecution as God's messengers in the former dispensation. Fully one half of the twelfth chapter is a corollary of the preceding chapter. In the forefront is set the example of Jesus, "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame." The call is to fidelity to the Christian position even to martyrdom, if needs be. The writer did not intend the words which follow to be applied to disease or sickness, nor can they so be used without wrenching them from their context in utter disregard of the principle in hand.

The scholars and ministers of the Church are nearly always on their guard against such action. They are quick to detect it and call attention to it when scoffers of the Bible or enemies of the Church resort to it; but in this instance the organized Church itself has misquoted and misinterpreted the Scripture and has placed the official

stamp of her approval upon her error to the harm of thousands of her faithful followers.

2. A False Theory of the Atonement

This point of view has been strengthened greatly by the insertion of one of the theories of the atonement, which many faithful Christians have considered to be thoroughly untenable as doing violence to the character of God. It is that theory which represents the crucifixion of Christ as the response to the demand of God for a sacrifice that would appease His wrath and thus spare the world and the sinners in it from destruction. God was about to visit a punishment and as Christ offered Himself, the Father visited the penalty upon Him. In this connection the commentator quoted above says: "Its truth is abundantly manifested by the *conduct of God toward* His Incarnate Son; for what son of God ever endured such pains of body or such distress of mind?"

The school-men of the middle ages spent entirely too much time on the speculation of the purpose and plan of God, rather than upon the results which followed the revelation of Jesus

Christ. Such a theory of the atonement is utterly incompatible with the character of God, the Father, as revealed by Christ. It is against the Gospel teaching. Yet because school-men made a mystery of the atonement, the minds of Christians have unthinkingly accepted it and each generation has handed it on. The commentator who wrote it received it from some commentator ahead of him, and so this deplorable theology may be traced from the first school-man who conceived it, to the man who preaches it to-day. To-day such a theory is an assault upon the conscience.

3. The Crucifixion and Disease

The fact that pain, sickness and suffering in general have been so closely associated with the sufferings of Christ on the cross and His act of atonement, has made this theory especially attractive to many devout souls. Thus they have grown to view sickness and pain and distress from a religious standpoint, which they honestly consider truly Christian, but yet which in its analysis is foreign to the teaching of the founder of Christianity. Reference is not made now to the early ascetics, who set up the special merit of pain, but

to many devout priests and their followers to-day, who hold the same idea and resent actively the introduction of anything that would tend to revive the ministry of the healing of the body.

Their position is that the seeking of healing by prayer is the exercise of a far lower order of faith than that which accepts with patience the visitation from the hand of God and bears it calmly until it is His "good pleasure" to remove it. Dr. William S. Sadler, who has made an exhaustive study of the various forms of faith healing and mental therapy, "suspects that many of these people have *embraced theology instead of accepting Christianity*. Many of the unfortunate devotees of religion are trying to duplicate in their lives the religious experience of some other human being with whom they are acquainted or about whom they have read. Had they become like little children, simply accepting the teachings of the Christ, they would have found an abundant entrance into the three glorious kingdoms: the kingdom of Heaven, the kingdom of happiness, and the kingdom of health. Fear unfailingly leads its victims on the pathway to moral defeat, physical suffering and *sanctified sorrow*."¹

¹ Sadler. "The Physiology of Faith and Fear."

One of the followers of this school recently presented his views upon the subject in *The English Church Review*. It is with deepest regret that I feel constrained to quote his words and take serious exception to his thesis, yet it is a task I am impelled to pursue in an endeavor to vindicate, not my thesis, but our Lord's position, and to liberate men's minds from this pious obsession.

This writer, a priest of the Church, in his introduction draws a comparison between the character of the faith of those who were healed by Christ, and the Christians who came after the great victory upon the cross. So he appeals: "If we set ourselves to win spiritual victories with Christ our head, and to study in His school of faith and patience, we may cheerfully wait, if we are strong enough to do so, till the next world for the manifestation of our progress;—if we believe this, as we are characteristically called to do as Christians, then how great is the spiritual distance which separates us from the great mass of those who were healed by the Lord and His apostles. They lived before the cross. They lived under a dispensation in which they were providentially called to learn the connection between morality and temporal prosperity. It is

probable that such a lesson could be learned better before the almost blinding light of the cross was lit for us."

The writer ignores the fact that the apostles continued their healing of multitudes "after the cross" to even a greater degree than they had healed with our Lord prior to the crucifixion. They did this in obedience to His commission to them, "Heal the sick," as important to them as to preach and to teach. Nor has the practice ever been discontinued. Wherever a true apostle of Christ is to be found with faith sufficient to exercise the gift and inspire a like faith in a disciple, there will be found an act of healing in and by the power of Christ.

The writer then proceeds to expand his theory for present day purposes: "If, then, our vocation as Christians is not primarily to seek outward relief from temporal evils, but to turn them to account by bearing them as our Saviour bore His Cross, what shall we say to those who tell us nowadays that sickness is in no sense the Will of God, that resignation or patient acceptance of it is a disastrous mistake, and that the Church has forgotten her principal duty and privilege in re-

gard to it—which is to preach recovery from sickness by faith as unhesitatingly as she preaches faith and repentance for the deliverance of souls from sin?

“The first point for us to insist upon is the primary importance of the salvation and sanctification of the soul. The second is that suffering has a great part to play in this sanctification; and that if its immediate removal does not in any given case further this sanctification, patient acceptance of the suffering is the higher and more fruitful course for sufferers. If it be urged that the faith which heals is always the path of spiritual progress by which sanctification of soul is most truly furthered, we reply that, as we have seen above, the faith which endures its trials unrelieved is higher in kind, whatever it may be in degree, than the faith which wins bodily healing; for it trusts the discretion as well as the power and goodness of God; it recognizes the sanctifying power of the patient endurance of pain as revealed by the Cross; it realizes that God may have purposes for us in a future life for which we may be best prepared by enduring suffering or infirmity unrelieved in this life; and it can, if necessary, say with

Job, 'Though He slay me, yet will I put my trust in Him.' ”²

It is hardly necessary to comment upon the above save to call attention to the fact that it sets forth a faith that endures *suffering as from God*, as of a higher value than the faith which seeks healing at the hand of God and in accordance with Christ's promise. Jesus did not promulgate such faith. On the contrary He praised as the *highest faith* He encountered, that of the Centurion, who sought healing for his servant. "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." St. Luke VII:9. The faith upon which He placed such a high value was the faith of the soldier in the unlimited forces under the control of the Master, which enabled Him to heal bodily illness at a distance. The above theory cannot be reconciled at all to the record of our Lord's comment upon the Centurion's faith.

The teachings of the theologian and the Gospel record are mutually exclusive.

The reader is also asked to note the subtle comparison of the sickness and the pain of the cross, which has contributed so largely to the acceptance

² *The English Church Review*. March, 1914. "The Passion of St. John the Baptist, and The Problem of Unalleviated Pain."

of the theory. This same idea is presented again at the conclusion of the following section, in which the writer takes up active opposition to the practice of healing:

"There are many sick people nowadays who have failed to find bodily relief in orthodox medical quarters and are disposed to turn to what is called 'spiritual healing.' The phrase is used to mean, not healing of the spirit, but healing of the body by psychical or spiritual means. There is a danger that we should suppose that, if the Church could satisfy this demand, she would win more valuable victories than she wins on the ascetical principles of the Office for the Visitation of the Sick.

"We have tried to show why we do not think this would be the case. And not only is bodily suffering a means of chastising a proud spirit, but it is in countless cases a means of developing a high degree of sanctity in people who might otherwise have been carried away unduly by the prevalent enthusiasm for activity, and might have neglected the care of the foundations, or may be of the refinements, of Christian character, and the wisdom and power of the cross."

The above argument has been answered in a

previous section (Chapter VI), but to this particular statement one might reply that the only logical, theological or scientific basis upon which such an argument could rest would be upon the evidence that the majority of the great saints had been physically chastened by God; and also that the majority of persons who were visited with chastisement by Him for this special purpose, were known to have improved spiritually.

The writer quoted above is not unmindful of the fact that since the apostolic period and even up to the present day there have been wrought many wonderful miracles of healing. He admits this in his essay, but at once applies to it a theory which would discourage its practice. I quote: "We cannot put any limit to what God can do to the body. We have read of one well known case in which a broken leg of many years standing was, after many years of prayer, at last both set and healed quite suddenly by prayer and faith alone. God is almighty and the evidence is good. *But that is not our point.* All that we contend is that the faith which works these wonders, glorious as it is, and all too far to seek, is still *not what we are primarily called to exercise as Chris-*

tians. Our characteristic Light and Glory and Wisdom is the cross."

There are two very important aspects of the character of the theology revealed above and which represents very fairly and fully the ideal of its followers.

First, it is utterly at variance with the teaching of Christ and the value He placed upon the faith which inspired men and women to reach out to Him for bodily healing. He did not make light of it. He gave it the highest praise. How familiar His words: "O woman, great is thy faith!" He did not commend the patient suffering of the woman afflicted with an issue of blood for twelve years, nor of the woman bound with an infirmity eighteen years. He recognized the exercise of a great faith and lauded it unstintingly and publicly. It was the kind of a faith that brought health to their bodies and peace to their souls. In many instances we read that the healed ones "glorified God," recognizing unerringly the hand of the Father in the blessing that had been bestowed.

Secondly, the followers of this theological theory are so tenacious in upholding their position that it has assumed the aspect of an obsession.

Not only do they refuse any place in the Church to-day to a ministry of healing, but they view it as antagonistic to their doctrine of the patient suffering of Christ upon the cross.

Here and there at intervals is to be seen the unusual manifestation of a minister of the Gospel, suddenly wrenching himself from the traditions of the past, and glorying in what seems like a new found faith with respect to this ministry. The liberation is all the more remarkable because such an one recognizes he not only had no help in his search for the truth from commentaries or from preachers, but on the contrary, had encountered a false teaching or silence. One who passed through such an experience relates it as follows:

"This perhaps is not the place to tell the joy of my own soul, from the great discovery of the power of God here and now to do what he did in the days when his Son walked the earth, as the great Saviour of men and the healer of all their diseases. It is needless to say that this thing that was revealed in secret seemed to me so wonderful and such a blessing for all men, that I could scarcely keep from 'proclaiming it on the house-tops.' I wondered why it was not even mentioned in the pulpits.

"I searched in the great commentaries to see what the wisdom of the schools had to say about this 'lost art' or this lost article in the most vital creed of Jesus. All I could find was a special gift bestowed upon the early Church to attract the attention of men to the great work of salvation, alone through Christ as the world's Saviour. When this truth was once thoroughly established, 'the gift of healing' naturally dropped off the stock of the growing church-life, like the cotyledons when the shoot has come sufficiently above the soil. But this explanation did anything but satisfactorily explain the absence of the lost message to my own heart. I felt as long as men had sickness, just so long as they had sin, one would expect that the restoring help of the Christ should come. Did not Jesus say, at the moment of His final departure, 'These signs shall follow those who believe'? Did not the disciples go forth proclaiming the word with boldness, and always with 'signs following'? When this law of the Christ was outlawed by any command from on high, either direct or implied, I have never been able to see, although I have asked many and many of God's wisest why they believed such was so. None have been able to give a reason that seemed

reasonable, that this part of the universal command of the Christ was ever done away with, this blessed law was outlawed.”³

Several months after the notes of this chapter were prepared, I came upon several extracts from a small book entitled “Our Lord’s Permanent Healing Office in His Church,” by the Rev. George Morris, late vicar of Biscat, Bedfordshire, England. Two of these set forth very clearly his vision of the duty of the church with regard to healing and his view of the antagonism and prejudice which exists within the Church against it. It is fortunate that this testimony may be obtained from the pen of an Anglican clergyman.

“The Lord’s healing office in His Church is part of His Gospel: therefore of the ministry of the Gospel. It is part of His redemption work on the Cross: therefore of His delivering work among men in the common salvation. It is part of His kingdom in the world: therefore of every believer’s present heritage in Him.

“It is part of that imparting of Himself to us which is the highest objective witness to Him: therefore a mighty answer to skepticism and all

³ Rev. Frank N. Riale, D.D. “The Sinless, Sickless Life.”

unbelief; a mighty aid to faith; and a distinct power unto holiness.

"It is in the hope that, in some measure at least, the Holy Spirit may use these words of mine to bring the divine claims of this subject to the attention of the clergy and laity of the Church of England, that they are written. The writer does not forget that perhaps the vainest of all hopes, the most presumptuous of all efforts, would be that of commending to any extent to the serious thought of the clergy, by one of the lowliest of themselves, a subject and a fact which—even in the advocacy of the most distinguished reputation, combined with eminence of office, the highest learning, combined with exceptional intellectual gifts, and the most persuasive language, and all these enforced by the exceeding luster of acknowledged holiness—might be powerless against the complicated interests of long desuetude and the force of prejudice. But what the author does hope for—having thankfully to acknowledge being wonderfully healed himself, and being also used of the Lord in the healing of others in several avowedly incurable cases—may not be too much for the Spirit of God to vouchsafe. It is that some brother here and there, suffering, and

poor withal, may find good news for himself; and deliverance, if he will trust fully the Christ he preaches: and be willing and glad then to own Him, that others, too, may thus know 'His Name, through faith in His Name.' And that, in a family here and there, a husband or a father, to whom a long doctor's bill means many a family privation, may, by his very sorrow over some dear one, be moved to give heed to this inadequate but true witness to Him Who is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and forever': and then, he tell another sorrowful husband, or father, or widowed mother, or some sufferer for whom there is 'no hope.' Thus, if this small knowledge of the Lord's healing spread, many a parish priest may perhaps gather strength and freedom of spirit to take the truth into his own heart for such of his sick poor to whom the Holy Spirit would lead him to speak of the Divine Healer."

In another section he touches definitely upon the penalty that has fallen upon the Church and her teachers by their neglect of the ministry and the refusal to carry out St. James' exhortation to anoint, on the ground that it is perplexing or obscure.

"Why is this message of St. James held to be

obscure and uncertain," he asks, "while those who obey the Lord's charge find it made real, as of old? Because we have so forgotten and overlooked our Lord's present redemption-relation to us as to the body, and have neglected it so utterly that we yield to God no recognition of its divine source; no reverence for its command; no faith in its promise; no desire for its blessing. Nothing can more painfully reveal the evil effects of a lengthened and common treating of any divine provision as if it were unreal; and any word of the Lord pertaining to His unchangeable relation to us in our nature, through His death and resurrection, as if it were no longer true, than such facts as the following: That no devastation by sickness; no desolation by death; no amount of anguish felt or witnessed; of hopeless saddening and darkening of family life; of pecuniary helplessness to obtain the most expensive aids required in some afflictions which yet are quite common amongst us; that none of these things, nor all of them together, avail so much as to awaken even a wish that this passage by St. James might be a true and an abiding word to us for faith to act upon. And, what is far sadder still, but inevitable—a forgotten truth, which we have learned to do

without, and whose place in the divine economy we have filled with a tradition, awakens the severest resentment even of the good when the Holy Spirit brings it again to light, and the Lord's Hand begins to replace it where it should ever have been. . . .

"How sad is the change which can make such witness to be as a strange thing! It is the true faith of the Church. It was no more doubtful in the beginning than the forgiveness of sins. And why? Because it had the place which Christ gave it. . . . Let us with reverent, thoughtful eyes see Him assigning divine healing its place in the present heritage which His people have in Him. We shall thus see Him revealing Himself to us as the Healer of our body, on the very same ground on which he forgives sin—that of His work of atonement and redemption."

The doctrine that sickness and disease are sent by God as loving correction has unquestionably had much to do with the decay of the ministry of healing. Many would have resorted to it had they not been told by some devout person that it was *opposed to Church teaching*. Furthermore, the revival of this ministry in the modern Church has been much retarded by it. When men and

women put this doctrine before them and honestly compare it with Christ's teachings and words, there is little doubt as to the choice that will be made.

A Summary

By way of summary I wish to present a few brief statements on the subject before this chapter is closed. The reader is asked (1) To think upon them, (2) to compare them with his Gospel reading, and (3) to pray earnestly for freedom from traditions and prejudices.

If we are to regard sickness or disease as a blessing, and as sent by God for our chastisement, why should we endeavor so quickly and in so many ways to overcome it? If we refuse to take it as from His hand or to bear it with patience, are we not depriving ourselves of a great blessing, a great sanctification, that He intends for us?

In like manner, if we endeavor to assist in the cure of others we are obstructing what might be God's blessing for them, and so are working against His will! Theologians have no escape from this dilemma.

We look upon that man as a monster who

sprinkled disease germs in the food of persons of whom he wished to be rid. Yet there are ministers who will go to a bedside and repeat stock phrases about God's "loving correction" over some Christian, suffering from a horrible disease. "We are careful not to impute evil to others," says Mr. Hickson, "especially to those we love. What should we think of a man who went about, if it were possible, giving cancer to people, or germs of disease to little children? Would that be a Christ-like life? Should we not all rise up in horror and adjudge such a man unfit to live? And yet—do let us face this fairly and squarely—are not many people, the vast majority of the world, ascribing to our Blessed Lord, our God of Love and Healing, these terrible diseases which are, in reality, the bondage of Satan and the fruit of man's own sin? Permitted by God, but not His will. Cancer is not the will of God for His children, and it is blasphemy to say that it is. O that the Light of the Risen Lord may shine now upon the darkness that is in the world, and in the minds of men, and scatter it, and break down the strongholds of Satan founded on this injustice, this lie against God! O that men might see, by the Light of the Holy Spirit, the sin of rejecting

Christ, Who came to us as the Healing Saviour, that their eyes may be opened to see Him, and their hearts filled with faith to receive Him! Then the power of evil binding so many in soul and body will be broken, and the Kingdom of God will come to us, in the coming of the King; for the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, with healing in His wings.”⁴

Christ's Knowledge of God's Will

Certainly our Lord knew the will of the Father and if there had been anything of that kind existent in God's plan He would have spoken of it. On the contrary His words and actions were in accord with the fact that it was *not God's will*. He healed every one who came to Him; He healed multitudes. It is stated frequently, “He healed *them all*.” His work was directly in opposition to disease and physical distress of *all* kinds. He *rebuked* the spirits and he *rebuked* the fever. That is the message of the Gospel and we can get nothing else out of it.

In His battle with the forces of evil which afflicted the mentally sick and deranged, He was

⁴J. M. Hickson. “The Healer.” May, 1915.

accused by the leading theologians of the day of living in league with the devil himself. They were jealous of His works and teaching, and wished to discredit His acts of kindness by declaring that His success was due to His relationship with the powers of evil. It is well known how He confounded them by His simple logic with which he answered this charge: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation: and a house divided against a house falleth. If Satan be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub." St. Luke XI:17 ff.

He revealed the true character of His work in this field by claiming that it was "with the finger (St. Matthew: 'Spirit' XII:28) of God that He operated and that "the kingdom of God is come upon you." He then warned them that in their endeavor to connect Him with evil works they were dangerously near the commission of the eternal sin. "But whoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, hath never forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." St. Mark III:29, 30.

Our Lord's concluding words constitute a very clear cut summary as to any divergence of opinion

upon the subject: "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." St. Luke XI:23. This should be taken very seriously to heart by those who, in modern times, confuse the source of sickness or disease or attempt in any way to discredit the efforts at combating it.

Every prayer to God for restoration of health, every effort at Spiritual Healing, is an act of co-operation with the will of God, with the desires of the Holy Spirit, and is in harmony with the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. The statements made by our Lord in these passages are so clear that there is no possibility of misunderstanding or uncertainty. Nor can we find any other record of His acts or teaching which nullifies the principle set forth. In just so far as men and women fail to present it and practice it, they are negligent in accepting and practicing the simple Gospel of Christ. (See St. Matt. XII:22-45. St. Mark III:19-30. St. Luke XI:14-36.)

One must also remember that much of the suffering in the world is absolutely *useless* as far as spiritual benefit is concerned. Little children are incapable of receiving any spiritual vision from illnesses they suffer, and if we persist in our en-

deavor to connect it with God's loving correction upon a father or mother, we convict ourselves of holding a very low estimate of a Deity who would strike a guilty person through an innocent one, and in such a heartless manner. Prof. Hogg brings out this aspect several times in his book.⁵ "Now in so far as the present world-order works as a mechanical system ruled by natural necessity, we may have to say of many pains and sorrows that they come upon us, not for any particular good purpose which they serve, but simply as the natural consequences of previous occurrences. But Christ makes available to us here and now the powers of a new world-order; so that for relief from sufferings which do not promote the ends of the kingdom 'we can rejoice and be exceeding glad.' (St. Matt. v:11-12; St. James 1:2-3.) For the Christian then there need be no useless suffering." Prof. Hogg is not unmindful of the suffering that Christians may have to undergo, in the form of persecution or distress because of their Christian fidelity. He is careful to distinguish between the two. "Because the perfect Kingdom tarries," he says (p. 50), "even the sons of the kingdom may be called upon

⁵ Prof. A. G. Hogg. "Christ's Message of the Kingdom."

to suffer. But the suffering is *only in the path of its service*. Against all other suffering—useless suffering—there is available for us, as there was for our Master, the fullness of the Father's power, because for us, as for Him, the Kingdom is already present."

When one points to a person who has maintained a firm hold on his faith throughout some great grief or illness, or has even grown in spiritual strength, it is by no means a proof that that disease was necessary, but that there was a greater power than disease which man might appropriate for his sustenance. *Evil, even in its worst form, can never equal in capacity or strength, the grace of God*. It simply remains for man to believe in it, and reach out for it, and this he must do in order to receive it.

"False Consolations"

Since the present terrible war began many preachers have been endeavoring to convey messages to their people by connecting the frightful disasters with the hand of God for the purpose of "cleansing the nations." Some consider it a punishment; others, while they do not go so far as

this, endeavor to trace a spiritual message from it. One man writes: "The nations at war are discovering their souls." William Austin Smith sees a "*false consolation*" in this point of view. In a recent essay⁶ he says: "The blessedness of a world in agony—what does it mean? How shall we estimate its moral worth? Do we want it? Is it worth what it costs? And do we know how much it will cost? Will this mood (this interpretation) make lasting contributions to character, or is there in store for Europe a disillusion such as the mourner knows, when, after the first transport of courage is past, he listlessly faces the void?"

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"But even were we certain that nations at war discover their souls, we might be permitted to doubt whether the end would justify the means. Surely there is a more decent, humane way for humanity to grow good than by the immolation of five million boys. The leaven of the Gospels was fitted to expand in other soil than blood and tears.

"I have seen men grow holy as they stood by the casket of a child. But dare we suggest such

⁶ *The Atlantic Monthly*, Dec., 1915.

sacrifice that parents may save their souls? Beatitudes may be too dearly bought. I have sometimes wondered whether we mortals were not too officiously eager in springing to God's defense whenever an earthquake, the horrors of war, or the premature death of our loved ones makes life a bitter thing. There are some experiences so terrible that even the extenuating fact of spiritual discipline seems to insult our courage, and to rob our grief of its patient dignity. Brave men smitten in their love may grow finer; but one would never be so base as to weigh together in the balance the spiritual gain and the human sacrifice it cost. I must believe that life affords to the soul, as it does to the body, cheerful ways of growing strong. While the modest loyalties of our daily life require such moral vigor, the Iron Cross of courage can be sufficiently earned on the battlefields of peace."

CHAPTER IX

THE HEBRAIC CONCEPTION OF GOD

THE final reply to the teaching of God's hand in chastisement is that it is not only foreign to the Gospel but is opposed to it. For a belief so widespread, however, there certainly must have been some basis. There was and it is not difficult to locate. The germ of the doctrine, as well as its development, is to be found in the religion of Israel. It is hardly necessary to state that in the minds of the Hebrews, everything that befell an individual or a community was considered a direct act of God. All the natural elements were considered as but instruments in His hand whereby He bestowed blessings as they were deserved or inflicted punishments as they were needed. Plagues, which carried off thousands, destruction by storms, lightning, earthquakes, at times the ravages of enemies, the defeat of armies, sickness, diseases and misfortunes of all descriptions, were accepted as acts of Jehovah and visited upon a

city for its wickedness; a nation for its apostasy; an army for the sin of one of its kings or generals; upon an entire family for the sin of one of its members; and upon men and women for their own sins. Frequently we find the belief that children were visited by disease or death for the sins of a parent, and in one instance we read of the mysterious slaying of the first born of every family among the Egyptians because of the double-dealing of their heathen king and his hatred of the Israelites. This religious doctrine is of course based on the primitive idea of "collective guilt" and the practice of executing collective punishment. The sin of one member of a family or tribe was supposed to be communicated to the other members, rendering them likewise culpable.

Many devout Christians have often been seriously troubled with respect to the suffering of innocent ones and children in great catastrophes, designated as having been inflicted by God as punishments for the unrighteousness of men. This problem comes particularly to the fore in the record of the flood. Why should all the innocent suffer also? The only scriptural answer is that of the priestly writer: "All flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth." Gen. VI:12. Prof. Bade, who

has made an extensive study of the moral development of the Hebrews, comments very satisfactorily upon this point: "Collective guilt, collective responsibility, sin diffused like a leaven through the whole lump—all expressed in one phrase! From the point of view of antiquity we have here a sufficient justification for God's indiscriminating destruction of 'all flesh.' The ancients were not often troubled by the feeling that wholesale catastrophes, which swept away entire populations, could not be regarded as divine punishments without impugning the justice of God. But their answer no longer suffices us. On moral grounds we have to discard it as a primitive act of God. Long adherence to the principle that righteousness, sin, and punishment can concern only the individual, has made the idea of collective responsibility appear barbarous."¹

The problem of David's choice of punishments, which so seriously reflects upon the moral character of God, is also considered by Prof. Bade: "When the time of reckoning arrived David was given his choice of three punishments: seven years of famine, three months of flight before his en-

¹ Prof. W. F. Bade. "The Old Testament in the Light of To-day."

emies, or a three days pestilence. David chose the pestilence and seventy thousand of his innocent warriors died for his personal act before the plague was stayed. To a modern mind such acts of caprice are unthinkable in connection with God.

"It would be obscurantism to hide from ourselves the fact that such beliefs have become untenable," continues the author. "*They are the product of a primitive science of the world, and a theory of the moral order which is to us immoral.* A larger science has enabled the modern man to see that God governs the world by orderly processes of law, not by sporadic interferences, and a deeper theology has shown a serious moral defect in the view that God employs great natural catastrophes to punish men, thus engulfing both the good and the bad in one common ruin. . . . The Hebrew prophet believed that earthquakes and eclipses of the sun could be warded off as easily as a pestilence—by the recovery of Jehovah's favor; for all were manifestations of divine wrath. The modern knows that the pestilence is in his own power if he can but find and destroy the microbe; that earthquakes are not sporadic

eruptions of divine punishment; and that a solar eclipse is a harmless phenomenon obeying laws so regular that the astronomer can fortell its advent to a second." ²

While there was a development away from this extreme teaching as seen in some of the prophets, the main idea remained firmly fixed in the religion of the race and its prevalence is revealed in various incidents in our Lord's life. Wherever He comes into contact with it, He reproves it and presents a conception of God and His dealings with men that are exactly the reverse. By word and deed throughout His entire ministry, He declared the old Hebrew idea to be a false conception of God. His teachings in this particular and on the subject of healing and punishments were always in reverse of those of the doctors of the temple.

In the Sermon on the Mount He discards many of the enactments of their religion and offers in place of them those higher precepts which He declares to be the same upon which God operates in His actions toward man. They are to love their enemies, bless those that curse them, pray

²W. F. Bade. *Ibid.*

for them that despitefully use them, in order that they may be the children of their Father which is in heaven. His example in this respect is thus shown. "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." St. Matthew v:44, 45.

When they ask Him of the man born blind, "Who did sin, this man or his parents?" they revealed their belief that *every malady* was connected with sin. He declares that this belief might frequently be erroneous when He says, "Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents." (St. John ix:3.)

Again, He tells them, in illustrating the same principle, that the men upon whom the tower of Siloam fell were not sinners above all the men that dwelt in Jerusalem. (St. Luke xiii:4.) Even where he found men suffering bodily disease as a direct result of their sins, He first forgave their sins and restored them to their bodily health as a result of their new found faith in Him. Surely in all this one must look upon Him as the revealer of the true character of God. Surely it is not wrong to follow Him in His *incessant criticism* of the Old Testament writings, wherever

it was stated or implied that God was the author of evil. *Yet in spite of the Gospel record, multitudes have taken over into the Christian religion this faulty Hebraic conception which our Lord strove so earnestly to correct.*

Christianity and the Churches who represent the teachings of the Master, will never come into their own until the theology of the Old Testament and the Gospels are separated in thought and in practice. To-day in many of our Churches they are accorded equal value. "Thus it happens, through ignorance of the facts of Israel's moral development on the one hand, and a false view of revelation on the other, that deplorably crude and immoral ideas about God are still imparted as the 'word of God!' The correction lies in realizing the fact that the prophets naïvely attributed to God their own feelings and sentiments, which naturally did not rise at all points superior to the moral and æsthetic limitations of their age."³

Prof. Bade directs a most illuminating ray of light upon the problem when he summarizes: "*The harm lies not in dealing with imperfect moral standards, but in failure to recognize them as imperfect.*"

³ W. F. Bade. "The Old Testament in the Light of To-day."

The Hebraic Conception in Christian Teachings

That the Old Testament with its primitive theology on the subject is accorded as high a place as any New Testament teaching, is shown in the constant reference by some writers and preachers to the sufferings and patience of Job.

The writer of the article in the *English Church Review*, whose position has been criticised as representative of this school, falls back upon the Old Testament to support his theory of the value of Christian suffering. In the same article considered in a previous chapter, he writes: "Since God wills to chastise sinners for their good, temporal evil is also called His will, and nowhere more clearly than by our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane. This is His contingent will; and its form is conditioned by the laws which men have broken and by the kind of discipline they need. And we may go so far as to say that in the eagerness with which the *inspired Hebrew mind rejoiced to attribute troubles to the will of God*, saying, for instance, of sickness, with Job, 'What! shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?' it showed a *profound instinct* for the only really peaceful, as well as

for the *true* point of view. . . . Thus, too, it was in consolation that Isaiah taught that, whatever might befall the people of God, they must remember that it all happened under the complete control of Jehovah. 'I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness; *I make peace and create evil*; I am the Lord that doeth all these things!' " In conclusion, he points to the "blessedness of the faith which Job exhibited when he cried, 'Though He slay me, yet will I put my trust in Him.' "

One cannot possibly reconcile such teaching with the oft repeated revelation of the Father by the Son, both in word and deed; nor has such teaching any rightful place in the system of a true Christianity.

Jesus worked visibly as God works invisibly. He was the outward expression of the Father's attitude toward man. "My father worketh hitherto and I work." (St. John v:17.)

"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things so ever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

"For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will

show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel." St. John v:19-20.

Nowhere can we find any evidence or teaching that would harmonize with the Hebraic conception of God. To those who persist in maintaining that position may we not hear our Lord Himself say: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. . . . Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." (St. John xiv:9, 10, 11.)

There was no question in our Lord's mind but that *He had given a perfect revelation of God*. He had left nothing undone, no side of the Father's love hidden. He says: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." St. John xvii:4. If there had been times when sickness or disease or misfortune, accident, blindness, pain or bereavement were necessary for our spiritual development, He would at least have mentioned it. In some one case or more He would have refused to heal and then would have pointed out the blessings that God intended to bestow through

continued pain. We look in vain for any evidence of this character.

In spite of this overwhelming evidence in the work and words of Jesus, there are those who refuse to relinquish the ideals of Job and the Old Testament with its principle of "discipline before blessing." "Yet," says Prof. Hogg, "it fits in so easily with our modern ideas of slow evolution and a distant world-goal, that we are far too ready to count it the whole truth. We make it the excuse for a lazy, unimportunate, unexpectant faith." ⁴

Dr. Mackintosh strikes the keynote of this great issue when he says in his "Introductory Note" to Prof. Hogg's book: "The emphasis here laid on the unprecedented power of the kingdom, as preached and realized by Jesus, is one symptom more of the revolt now proceeding in the Christian mind against the old deification—we may call it so—of natural law and casual uniformity."

The author of "The Practice of Christianity" goes a step farther in his condemnation of this religious error. The first chapter of this book is devoted to a consideration of the subject. He

⁴ Hogg. "Christ's Message of the Kingdom."

shows how the Jews through their hardness of heart had a false mental image of God and that many in the Christian world "must admit that, blinded by our hardness, we are liable to consider evil laws and customs righteous and Christian, and to idolize a false mental image of God." "Humanity," he states, "must recover from the insanity which embraces evil as good before unhindered progress can begin."

His summary bears with it a relentless logic from which it is impossible to escape: "We quite naturally attribute to God all the good we recognize; and if in any particulars we are embracing *evil as good*, we also attribute evil to God and worship what is false. Looking back through history we see that at every epoch much evil was embraced as good. We see some slow moral progress in history, spite of the embrace of evil as good, but no proof at all that the evil of each age was necessary to that age and a factor in progress. Jesus taught that if His own age repented of its evil customs and mental habits, the reign of God was within their reach! This is essential to Christian faith. Jesus—the outward manifestation of the Eternal Christ—weeping over Jerusalem is the evidence of the constant

wrestling of the creating Logos or Love of God with free subjects in process of making. We are bound, therefore, if we would practice Christianity, to challenge our present customs and opinions and see how far they *grieve* and *misrepresent* God. We must not be deterred from the initial duty of personal judgment because we fear its results or because we cannot foresee any corporate result from such individual judgment.”⁵

In an extract received after this MSS. was finished, the same author, in his more recent book, “The Christ That is to Be,” summarizes the subject very clearly. “We are endeavoring,” he writes, “to perpetuate false ideals of spiritual health—ideals consistent with bodily weakness and disease—because high spiritual attainments were certainly reached by the saints in a period when bodily strength was ignorantly supposed to be a hindrance to spiritual attainment. Our religious prejudices are still fed by the eminent devotion that we find in the memoirs of individual ascetics, because we have not realized that their spiritual life became lusty in spite of, not because of, their neglect of the body. *A corporate prejudice* is always the path of least resistance for the

⁵ “The Practice of Christianity.” (Anon.)

individual mind; and yet, at the door of our understanding, the Christ would seem to wait in simplicity, offering a perfectly natural, because a perfectly Divine, salvation."

CHAPTER X

THE FAILURE OF THE CHURCH

THUS, for centuries, Christianity has been weighted down with a burden that does not belong to it and which has had the effect of seriously obstructing the preaching and acceptance of the full Gospel. The error has become so general that it has assumed the importance of a Christian doctrine, particularly as it has been associated so intimately, and yet so wrongfully, with the sufferings of Christ upon the cross. There are many devout souls to whom the appropriation of the full Gospel with its message of healing would be "like heresy." Timidly some would consider it a sin or an act of disobedience to refrain from accepting that chastisement which God sent them that they "might be more Christ-like." On the other hand, many devout souls have come to see the emptiness of such theology, and the misrepresentation of God in such reasoning. They long for the healing ministry; they wish to remain true

to the Church, but only here and there can they be fed and ministered unto, according to the example and intention of the Master.

The Church can never exert her full strength in her task of winning the world, can never make the progress which she should; men and women can never come into the full inheritance as disciples of Jesus, until we strip our God of the traditional Hebraic conception, and rest back surely upon the teachings of Christ with respect to the character and will of His Father. That which is in opposition to His teaching may be some form of religion but it is not Christianity, and has no place in any Church that represents itself as Christian.

There are many healing cults which are laying the stress upon the healing of the body. In many instances the soul is lulled to sleep and enters upon a process of starvation. So long as comfort and ease is maintained all is well. On the other hand the majority of Christian teachers have been accustomed to lay stress upon the healing of the soul alone, and in reverse manner have commended the deprivation of the body and the granting of special spiritual merit to physical suffering. So multitudes of earnest followers of

Christ, who seek from Him the whole truth, have been bewildered by the counter attractions of these two extremes. Some have gone the full distance one way, and others equally the full distance in the opposite direction. Many remain within the two boundaries wavering and fluctuating this way and that, seeking help and guidance from those who, at times, prove "blind leaders of the blind."

Multitudes of earnest faithful Christians, true lovers of the Master, are longing for this ministry. Often it needs but a touch, a word, to free their minds from the long bondage and to enable them to enter into the full appreciation of the glorious truth that Christ came to minister, not only to sick souls, but to sick bodies as well, and to dispel and cast out all manner of disease.

Many Christians in their spiritual development have come to recognize the Living Presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. We are taught and we believe that He is indivisible, and that in that presence He is truly the risen Lord in all His fullness. Why then should His presence as a Healing Saviour be denied or questioned? Can He not come in the fullness of His power to heal our bodies as well as our souls, according to the measure of our faith? There is not one Christ

for healing the soul, and another Christ for healing the body. There are not two Christs, but one Christ.

Until we believe the great truth, we have failed to catch the vision of the Master's message for mankind; until we teach it, we have failed to present the Gospel He bade us proclaim to all the world; until we practice it we deprive ourselves and others of the manifold blessings He desires to bestow upon the children of men, and which He commanded His disciples should impart. Those who believe otherwise, teach less, and fail to practice, may claim a Christian heritage, but it is a limited religion, warped by a primitive theology which they have embraced, not Christianity—not the full teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

That the Church in general has failed to present this full teaching is only too obvious. By the Church I mean at this time the visible organization which represents Christianity to the world, her official records and documents, her orders, rules and books of prayer, upon which she places her official stamp, and her directors and priests and ministers and the laymen who have a part in her enactments in conference and Convention assembled. The official Church has failed utterly

to preserve anything that partakes of the healing of the body as taught by Christ and practiced by the apostles. She does not preserve the anointing office used in the early Church; she preserves no prayers for the exercise of faith for healing, nor any office in form of words or acts for the laying on of hands. Upon this subject the modern Church woefully fails to represent the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. In place of making provision for the exercise of Christian healing according to our Lord's precept and commands, she treats the subject precisely in the opposite way. She distinctly states that sickness is a visitation from God and exhorts the patient to submission to the chastening hand of a loving Father. The office of the "Visitation of the Sick," and practically all the prayers for the sick in the English Prayer Book are saturated with this unhappy theology, which, in its mischievous effect in distorting the truth, is equaled only by symbolic commentaries referred to in the preceding chapter. Many efforts have been made in recent years to have an anointing office added to the Prayer Book, but they have been unsuccessful both in England and America. The record of these ef-

forts is presented in "The Revival of the Gift of Healing."

In the Roman Church the apostolic custom of anointing the sick began to lose its original character about the eighth century. From this period on one may mark its development into the modern sacrament of Unction, the object of which is the preparation for death, not the healing of the body. The Rev. F. W. Puller ("The Anointing of the Sick," p. 191, S. P. C. K.) can find no trace in the first seven centuries of sick people being anointed for the "remission of sins" or to impart to them grace enabling them to die happily or courageously. "On the other hand as soon as we come to the ninth century the custom changes, and we find that in the ninth and following centuries Unction is chiefly regarded as a preparation for death." He holds that this change was due to an abandonment of the St. James passage. The office for anointing the sick, which appeared in the English Prayer Book of Edward VI, was omitted in the second book in 1552, and has never again appeared. While this was a loss as an office, the prayer and form is far from satisfactory as "it was based upon medieval rather than apostolic and primitive teaching." Many who prac-

rice anointing to-day use an apostolic form. (See "Revival of the Gift of Healing.") The modern Russian church practices anointing with a view toward the restoration of health.

Ever since the anointing office was dropped from the Prayer Book there has been a steady decay in the exercise of healing within the Church. For centuries candidates for Holy Orders have had no information vouchsafed to them other than perhaps the date of the omission of the anointing office and its peculiar development in the Roman Church, where it has been given the character of a totally different sacrament, alleged to impart a blessing unrelated to it in apostolic times. Consequently the vast majority of our clergy in England and America have been reared in total ignorance of the character of the gift of healing and the various forms by which it may be exercised.

Nor is this woeful ignorance confined to the Anglican Church. Those bodies which separated from her both in England and America, left of course with a broken heritage as far as healing was concerned, and none of these bodies has ever officially taken up the subject and made provision for it among its people. In nearly all the sects the

harsh theology of God's chastening hand in sickness is fully as efficacious in discouraging any general return to healing through faith, as are the unfortunate prayers in the English Prayer Book.

The Church to-day, therefore, not only fails to provide proper methods for healing but places her official stamp on an office and a collection of prayers, which discourage healing on the part of the minister and present a view of sickness so false that it stifles faith on the part of the patient.

This theology and these prayers have given birth to a school of thought which seeks to defend the Church in her present position. Its followers are devout men of pious minds and practices, who seek to justify the prayers and the theology of God's chastisement by showing how the soul may be purified by patient suffering. This of course is a return to the early error that God really does send sickness, and that much more is gained by suffering than in seeking to get rid of it.

Those who take this position always confuse suffering which comes as a result of persecution in martyrdom with sickness and disease, for they always offer the inevitable reference to our Lord's pain and suffering on the cross and His prayer in the garden: "Thy will be done."

The use of these incidents in our Lord's life in support of their theory, and their recommendation to patient endurance, is illogical and unscriptural. It has been misused so long and by so many who were looked upon as teachers, that its true meaning has been obscured. Stripped of its context a totally different character has been imparted to the words.

They were words used by our Lord during a deadly spiritual battle and do not reflect at all upon the uncertainty of Christ with regard to the Father's will on the subject of disease or physical suffering.

It would be manifestly unfair to dismiss a topic as important as this with a mere statement. The issue is one which should be faced squarely and honestly and I shall treat the question in full in a later volume.

The great fact remains, however, that there are hundreds of devout men and women within the Church, who believe that our Lord's power to heal was not withdrawn from the Church and that they are looking in vain for encouragement from their spiritual leaders, from whom they should receive guidance and direction in matters of faith and in the full expression of their religion. There

are devout men and women who believe in the Church and all that she teaches. They are conscious that there is something lacking with respect to the healing offices, yet they are at a loss to understand wherein the difficulty lies. Not a few have left the Church because of her neglect in this very important ministry. Others strong in loyalty, feeling that the error lies in men rather than in God, remain in the Church without the ministry, or practice it in little groups, where the faithful are drawn together.

Since the publication of my first book ¹ I have had many letters from men and women from all parts of the United States and Canada, stating they were about to become interested in Christian Science, but could not bear the thought of leaving the Church. Now they rejoiced to know that the healing by faith was being brought back to the Church.

The training of the clergy upon the subject has been so one-sided that in many quarters there comes a definite resistance to the admittance of the ministry of healing. All that I have written in this chapter has been amply corroborated by the adverse criticism of my first book. Not a few

¹ "The Revival of the Gift of Healing."

of the clergy, and some of my closest friends, took me to task for my attack upon the Prayer Book, and also for my assault upon the long-cherished doctrine of God's part in sickness. I realized that these criticisms arose on one hand from a sense of loyalty to the Prayer Book, false loyalty, I might say, even though sincere and well-meant; and on the other hand, from a deep veneration of the conventional theology in popular use for several centuries. One very dear old priest lamented the fact that I was suggesting the "taking away of the doctrine of pain."

I will take second place to no one with respect to loyalty to the Prayer-Book. But I refuse to accept those parts of any office that are not in accord with our Lord's teaching. Upon the same ground I criticize and discard the theology upon which those prayers are based. Many of the clergy reject the theology but are quite uncertain and perplexed as to further action because of a lack of suitable prayers and their inability to use extempore prayer. This may also be attributed to defective theological training. In this respect the vast majority of our present clergymen are the unhappy "victims of a system."

The clergy have been brought up to resort to

the printed prayer in the book upon all occasions. While this undoubtedly has its advantages, it has become so exclusively the practice that it has obscured the spiritual and intellectual activity of many men on the subject and really prevented them from tapping the wondrous sources of extempore prayer. If there is any one great shortcoming which might be charged against the clergy in England and America as a whole, it is in this respect. It reveals a lack of capacity which people expect of us as ministers of God. There is scarcely a clergyman who has not had the experience of finding himself asked to offer prayer in certain cases of illness for which the Prayer Book furnished no appropriate prayer. The result has been the use of a totally inappropriate collect or a most embarrassing effort at prayer. The habit of centuries has fastened itself on us with such deadly grip that we are almost "slaves of the book" we have learned to love and almost venerate. We now awaken to find that, mentally and spiritually, we do not possess the book as a guide. It possesses us as a tyrant. The vast majority of us are absolutely lost in public prayer without it. Many of our clergy have learned to think

well upon their feet, but alas, *how few have learned to think upon their knees!*

I know that some of the clergy will take issue with me at this point, by citing some of the rambling discourses which pass for extempore prayer in some of the sectarian bodies; but I do not refer to extempore prayer in public worship, nor advocate, for one moment, its adoption in place of our beautifully ordered prayers in matins and evensong. I would not part with a single collect. But I do earnestly appeal for the use of extempore prayer in sick rooms and in homes at pastoral calls, and wherever else it may be required. We should be ready to pray in season and out of season, upon any subject that may present itself. It is a wonderful thing to pray for people as "the Spirit gives us utterance," just as it is to speak to them under that guidance. Yet with many of the clergy extempore prayer is well nigh impossible because of their years of training in and dependence upon the written form. Certainly we must feel that this is a distinct barrier to the full operation of the Holy Spirit in prayer. To pray a fitting prayer suited and shaped in every particular to the peculiar circumstances of a certain condition, offers blessed privileges in prayer

and provides unlimited opportunities for spiritual and physical help which are not to be obtained in our Prayer Book prayers.

In the work of the Society of the Nazarene we have simple forms of written prayers which meet these conditions. They are prepared so as to be easily adaptable to minor change and are memorized by the clergy and altered as circumstances require. The joy and the marvelous results which follow this form of prayer soon prove its great value.²

There are no two souls alike any more than there are two bodies alike. Each case needs treatment adapted to its peculiar constitution and tendencies. Certainly the minister of God should be ready to exercise as much intelligence in his work as does the physician. Surely the delicate character of the soul offers at least as many subtle varieties and possible complications as the body. To pray the same weak, half-hearted, ambiguous, faith-killing prayer for every case whether man,

²To those especially interested I recommend a very helpful little book, "Prayers for Healing," published by Allenson, London. It contains many beautiful prayers used in the early Church, when faith in God's desire to heal, and in the reality of Our Lord's healing presence among His people was still fresh in the minds and hearts of the majority of His followers.

woman or child, saint or sinner, does not reflect credit upon the intelligence or the spiritual insight of the messenger who claims to come from God with a Divine message and with Divine help. Picture a physician who would go from house to house and administer the same dose from the same bottle, irrespective of the nature of the malady of each patient.

The ministry of the soul and body is an obligation from which no true pastor can escape and it offers opportunities which should be for him a source of never ending pleasure, inasmuch as in times of sickness there is opened unto him an access directly to the soul of man, which is not offered under ordinary occasions. It presents a real opportunity for real salvation, and the exercise to the fullest of his function as a messenger of God. Some patients need to have their faith strengthened; in others one finds practically no faith at all and it has to be remade. Some dear saints need but the consolations and the benefit of fellowship in prayer. Some find it necessary to make a confession and receive the benefit of absolution, because it is through their sins that they have been brought so low. Still others need to have a groundless fear removed or a

needless grief assuaged by a comforting Gospel message. It is not necessary to multiply cases. One might go on indefinitely. But they are to be found in profusion. They exist and we cannot be assured that we are performing our duties as messengers of God and disciples of Our Lord if we are not ministering in spiritual affairs with the intelligence and discernment with which we see professional men ministering in the material affairs. We should have all their zeal, their keen perception, their patient investigation and study—and more.

What greater inspiration to service could there be than the realization that one bears not only an uplifting message from God to the human soul, but a blessed gift of healing in our Lord's name, to the body of man as well!

CHAPTER XI

EVIDENCES OF AN AWAKENING

DURING the past year or two there has been a hopeful change in the attitude of many of the clergy upon the subject. They have been brought to consider it seriously and encouraged to do some independent thinking. The result has been a complete change of mind, and not a few of the early critics have been frank and generous enough to write of their agreement and support. The proposed revision of the Prayer Book has for some time occupied a prominent place in the discussions of the clergy and in the conventions of all the dioceses. While there are adverse opinions held on many points of omission or enrichment or upon theological change, there is a very general agreement upon the uselessness of the present visitation office. That this office and the other prayers for the sick are totally inadequate in meeting the spiritual and physical needs of our people is now admitted by the vast majority of the clergy. That

the theology also underlying parts of the Visitation Office is unquestionably false and foreign to the teachings of Christ, and does dishonor to the character of God, is frankly conceded by scholars of the several schools. Further, it is admitted by almost every student that practically all of our printed prayers are so faulty in construction as to inhibit faith in God's desire to heal. Surely they do not inspire the patient to any belief at all in our Lord's healing presence.

In a series of papers recently published (1916) entitled "The Revision of the Prayer Book," The Rev. John P. Peters, D.D., devoted considerable space to the failure of the Prayer Book with respect to the ministry of the sick. His attitude toward the book he expresses in the following loyal terms: "If then I criticize, I do it as so admiring that I can be content with nothing but perfection; as so loving that I cannot bear even to see that Liturgy seem to any useless or feeble."

Of the absence of the element of faith in our present prayers he writes: "We pray with no heart in any prayer in the Prayer Book for the restoration of health to the sick. Do we not really believe in the answer of prayer, that we dare not put up a petition to God to heal the sick? Our

faithlessness there has driven men into Christian Science. . . .

"All will agree, I trust, that this book is a book of Common Prayer, for the use of the common Christian man, and not merely for the antiquarian or the historian; a practical book, a spiritual book, a guide to life and devotion. If so, I suppose we should omit from it those things which are purely antiquarian, which have ceased to be used for devotion by any. Does any one to-day use 'The Order for the Visitation of the Sick?' Is this intended for the use of parish priests? I should like to know if there is any priest in the whole of the United States who habitually uses, or who ever has used, 'The Order for the Visitation of the Sick' contained in the Prayer Book. Whether this was originally a theoretical service invented by the closet scholar I do not know; but I do know that it is not now and has not been within the memory of man a service in practical use. There are prayers and thoughts and ideas in it which individually are beautiful, and some of which I think all of us who are priests engaged in the practical administration of the Word to the sick and needy would like to retain, but not in the form of the Order for the Visitation

of the Sick. Any doctor will exclude it and its bearer from the sick-room."

Dr. Peters also severely criticizes the forms of prayer for "fair weather,"¹ "in time of dearth and famine," of "great sickness and mortality" and says "they might well be rewritten to adapt them to modern needs and conditions, and to make them readily suitable for use as the framework of prayers, not only for ourselves, but also for others—in tragedies such as the Chinese floods and famines, the Armenian massacres, the Servian pestilence, the European war, and various calamities and disasters at home and abroad. To some extent also their theology should be revised, as by the omission of phrases, teaching, contrary to Christ's own express doctrine, that these things are of necessity a punishment for the sins of the sufferers. That is an ancient belief, which has persisted in the popular mind and the popular theology. Job protested against it. Our Lord condemned it, specifically, in the case of the man born blind, of those whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices and those on whom the tower fell,

¹In this, the petitioner asks God "to restrain those immoderate rains, wherewith, for our sins, thou hast afflicted us" . . . "that we may learn by Thy punishment to amend our lives."

but above all in general by His Crucifixion. Still it persists in the popular mind, which is, however, no excuse for teaching it in the prayers of the Church.

"A complaint often made of the prayers used in non-liturgical services is that they are not really prayers to God, but exhortations or instructions to the people under the guise of prayers. To some extent the same charge may be made against some of the prayers in our collection, and especially is this true in the case of the prayers for the sick. Their intention does not seem to be to beseech God for the sick person's restoration to health, but rather to prepare the person and his friends for his death. Moreover, the wording of these prayers is such that it would seem they were not intended to be used for any except those for whom there was small hope for recovery. To the irreverent it might even look as though they were so worded as to avoid the prayer test. 'Pray for my son, who is sick.' He dies, and the father says: 'Prayer is vain.' 'Oh, no,' is the answer; 'our prayer had an alternative, and that has been answered.' I think we should have at least one prayer which shall be a fervent prayer for restoration to health, and which people will

naturally ask for when they are sick, even if they do not think they are going to die. We should have also a prayer suitable for use before an operation.

"Such prayers should be fervent prayers for restoration to health, or for a successful issue of the operation. The prayer of faith does always in heart say: 'Thy will, not mine, be done'; but to express this outwardly in every prayer is to kill faith in prayer. It is as though one were to say: 'Thy kingdom come, but when and if you will; Give us this day our daily bread, but not unless you think best to give it.' The man who habitually prayed like this would soon cease to pray at all. Let us venture to pray for health simply and directly. We do not suppose that by prayer, as by some magic, we can charm God and direct the universe, but we do believe that in any need we may go to God as a child to a father, and that as a father He will hear, and some way, somehow, answer us."

The extracts presented above appear in various parts of the papers and indicate the grave importance Dr. Peters attaches to the failure of the Church in her official voice to express the teachings of Christ and to show faith, that great

faith which He endeavored to inspire in men. That he realizes the great need of serious attention to the subject is shown finally in his conclusion to the Papers:

"The new mission of healing will lead others to ask for a service, either to take the place of the present Visitation of the Sick, or for use in the Church in supplication for the sick, and in connection with this some would like the restoration in some form of the ancient rite of anointing of the sick. It seems to me that there is room for all these things in the Prayer Book, and that all should find their place there. No one school should dominate, but the Church Catholic, the living Church of to-day, should find the Prayer Book adapted to its present needs and looking toward future growth. There cannot be services for every single occasion, but the Book should be a guide to the minister, giving him the framework and the thought for services and prayers, suitable to all the variety of needs of our religious life."

The revision of the present Visitation Office and the other prayers for the sick, and the insertion of prayers of a more hopeful and inspiring character, should be one of the easiest and most

popular tasks of the Committee on Revision. But no matter how commendable and fortunate the suggested changes may be, the legislation connected with the revision of the Prayer Book is so involved that it will be six years and perhaps nine years or longer before any such changes can be made operative and placed in the hands of the people in approved form. Meanwhile the masses of our communicants are not receiving the ministry of healing and many are leaving the Church, not only because of the neglect of this ministry, but because the Church places the official stamp of her approval upon a doctrine which impugns the goodness of God and nullifies the teaching of Christ on the subject of the healing of the body.²

The losses the Church has sustained and the conditions which have contributed to the deflection of many, will be set forth in the following

² The commission in their report to the recent General Convention were unanimous in their recommendation that the present office for the Visitation of the Sick be removed from the Book. They offered in its place an office in which every prayer is an inspiration to faith, and which does not contain a single reference to the Hebraic theology that God has a hand in sending or prolonging disease. This marks a great step toward the acceptance of our Lord's teaching on the subject of healing.

chapter, in which I shall present also a constructive working plan by which the gift of healing may be revived and exercised, until such time as the Church may succeed in providing proper prayers and in restoring the apostolic office of anointing.

CHAPTER XII

THE LOSS AND THE REMEDY

IN spite of the fact that the ministry of healing has provided the inspiration for one of the most important religious movements of the present generation, there are to be found many Churches where the subject is not accorded serious attention. In other Churches it is considered and discussed, but treated as a matter of minor importance, and not at all as of equal value with preaching and teaching. Not a few have thought that the widespread interest in the subject was only temporary and that it would in course of time die away. This attitude is due partly to the fact that the Christian Churches have worked off their first excitement attendant upon the phenomenal rise of Christian Science, and partly because there is a waning of the early popularity of the effort made, within the Church, to offset Christian Science by counter attractions in the form of psycho-therapy.

The attacks made upon Christian Science, while perhaps theologically satisfying (and in many instances scientifically satisfying also), have had no results in quenching the desire of Christians for a healing ministry. More especially is this true in that, after such attacks were made, the Church offered nothing in their place, and the hearers found themselves where they were when they started, *i.e.*, without a healing ministry. They were told that Christian Science was "all wrong," but they were not told what was "all right." *Nothing from nothing does not leave very much.*

Thus the Christian Science sect and the healing cults had a free field with their religion of health, and their steady record of drugless cures; while the orthodox Christian Church member was left with a theology which not only connected the hand of God with every illness, but also attached to it some mysterious purpose, said to be in accordance with His divine Will.

It is little wonder that under these circumstances the healing cults were able to draw their recruits most largely from those who were born and reared in the Churches. It is estimated that fully nine-tenths of the members of these sects to-day were formerly members of Christian bodies from

which they departed because of the total neglect or the erroneous presentation of this aspect of religion. The greater part of the increasing membership is still being drawn from the same source. The missionary work that is being carried on by these cults everywhere is most devoted and persistent, and the propaganda most lavish. Friends and former Church members are adept at introducing the subject, and a call is invariably followed by the receipt of several very attractive pieces of literature. Thousands of copies of the article, "Must Protestantism Adopt Christian Science?" by a former clergyman of the Church, have been circulated gratis in the homes of many Christians, but most largely of course among those of the Church's faith.¹

The losses in some congregations are by no means a small matter. Many rectors are astonished to learn that some one has gone into Chris-

¹ Although the author of the article has long since retired from the ministry and is no longer a member of the Church, copies of the reprint of the article continue to appear with the following observation printed in the introductory page: "The Author of this article is a priest in the Protestant Episcopal Church. His work among his own people and his observations of those outside his communion have led him to the conclusions embodied in the present article."

tian Science, when they did not suspect the person was even interested in the subject. An investigation shows that the work and study and influence has been going on for a year or more, and that it is too late to reclaim the departing one. If any clergyman seeks solace with the comment that "the person was, after all, a very weak and rather useless Church member," he may find himself pursuing a phantom consolation. He would be surprised, perhaps, to know that the one whom he had looked upon as "dead wood," for a year or two, had, under a different environment, taken on a new life; had risen to higher levels in daily living, had become an enthusiastic worker, was a regular attendant at the mid-week services in addition to the regular Sunday services of the new sect, and was contributing more money in a month than he or she had given in a year while a member of his Church.

I do not present this in extenuation of the departing Church member. I write it as a fact, and it is worth serious thought. It is not the exception. It is a picture of the average case.

One cannot, of course, blame the clergy for all the deflections from the Church, but when one considers that the majority of these people leave

because they are longing for an aspect of religion which Christ taught, and which the apostles practiced, and which pervades the New Testament, it is sufficiently serious to cause one to question whether the clergy are really presenting the *whole Gospel* and also whether they are practicing it.

Even among Christians who are so strongly rooted in the faith that they could not desert their communion for the attractions of Christian Science, there is the deep longing for the ministry the Church fails to provide. I have many touching letters from devout saints who are almost in despair over the deadness of the Churches generally on this subject. It is a sad revelation of the distance many Christians have drifted from their original anchorage. In not a few instances, suffering ones who desired prayers, with the laying on of hands or anointing, have written that their clergyman did not know how to go about it. Others, who asked for help in overcoming some nervous depression or habit, had been referred to some Church that was "interested in psychotherapy."

One young woman, living in a town in the Middle West where there was no church, wrote that she believed she would be healed if she were

anointed. She had been a sufferer for several years and, although she had been attended by three physicians, had received no benefit. She named the nearest city, saying she would go there if I could arrange to have a priest anoint her. I wrote to four clergymen before I could find one who would consent to perform this ministry for her. It took nearly two months to grant the request of this young Christian woman, born in the Church, faithful and devout, and earnestly desiring the gift our Lord bestowed upon the Church.

In another town, in New England, a Church-woman wrote me she earnestly desired anointing, but that the minister did not believe in it and would not perform it for her. There were two other congregations in this town. I wrote first to one clergyman and then to the other, explaining the case and asking each if he would anoint the woman. Neither has replied. This Church-woman still remains without this ministry.

In the Middle South a priest was secured to go to a certain town to anoint a young woman who had asked for it. Soon afterward the sister of the patient wrote me that the incident was a most unhappy one, and that she feared it was not going to prove beneficial to her sister. She stated that

the clergyman, when he entered the room, told the patient he never had anointed any one before and that he really didn't know much about it. He also added that she must not be discouraged if she didn't improve, as perhaps "it might be God's will that she should not get well." The writer concluded by stating that her sister was much depressed by the visit.

It is hardly necessary to comment upon these cases. They speak for themselves and reveal a very unhappy condition in the Church, and they cry aloud for remedy. Unfortunately, they are not special cases, confined to a particular locality or characteristic of one type of Churchmanship. They are general and *represent many other incidents* of a similar nature which could be recorded.

There is another side to the picture, however, and it is full of encouragement. A Churchwoman from the South was rushed to a certain northern city to undergo a serious operation. She had just read the book, "The Revival of the Gift of Healing," and she wrote me to send her the name of a priest who would anoint her before the operation, as she believed she would be helped. The time was so short that arrangements had to be made by wire. The first priest I notified of the

case, although a stranger to me personally, responded and anointed her at once. The whole character of the disease changed within a few hours. The specialists were mystified, and only a very slight operation was performed. This also is but characteristic of many similar incidents, reported from all over the country, where patients, who have asked for laying on of hands and the prayers of the faithful, have recovered very rapidly, much to the astonishment of physicians. In one instance, a Christian physician said, "God has done easily what I could not accomplish." Other physicians have said, "It is strange. I must have been mistaken in my diagnosis."

As a matter of common duty, every clergyman in the Church should be ready, at a moment's notice, to go to the bedside of a patient and pray a prayer of faith in our Lord's Name, and *with belief* in His power to heal, accompanied by laying on of hands; or, when requested, to anoint the patient, with a view toward restoring health, not preparing the soul for its passing.

To pray without faith is a mockery, and to use laying on of hands, or anointing, without faith, is to reduce this sacred ministry of a living Christ to the low level of mesmerism and elementary

magic. The vital current cannot be imparted without faith. "Because of your unbelief," was our Lord's reply to His apostles when they inquired of Him the reason for their failure.

Until that time arrives, however, when all ministers of God everywhere will be ready to perform this work in full faith, I appeal to the clergy *who do believe* in this ministry to enroll themselves as active believers and workers, so that, when Christians in their city or locality ask for this spiritual service, one may be enabled to direct them, without delay, to a shepherd who will exercise it for them.

The movement to revive this ministry, represented by the Society of the Nazarene, is not a party movement with a view toward stressing the anointing of the sick as a sacrament. In the first place, the anointing is never stressed; nor is it used unless it is especially desired. Our people should be taught to ask for it in faith. It is the custom of believing ones to "*send* for the elders," as they did in the apostolic days. In the second place, the apostolic character of the act is retained. This means that it possesses a power, and imparts a grace, different from that to be found in the modern abuse of the sacrament of

Unction, which is so altered in character that it is reserved largely for patients on their death-bed, and is administered as a means of comfort for the dying, not as an act designed solely for the recovery of the sick person. Our aim is to restore the anointing to the Church in its true apostolic character.

Nor is it a movement organized with a view toward setting up a "healing cult," with bodily health, mental ease, and physical comfort as the *sine qua non* of religious belief.

Nor, finally, is it a "healing movement," in which courses in psychology are an introductory requirement; which practices one of the innumerable branches of psycho-therapy in a pathetically experimental way, and which, in every step, is limited by the diagnosis of medical men, and their opinion as to the possibility of benefit resulting from the "treatment." The only real faith visible in such a movement is unbounded faith in the infallibility of Science. By Science I mean those branches which embrace the medical and psychological departments. Its devotees seem to ignore the fact that psychology is quite the newest of all the branches of Science, and that so little is still known about the body that great specialists and

surgeons daily disagree with each other as to the cause of a disease and the treatment of a patient.

The Society of the Nazarene represents a movement to revive and quicken simple faith in Christians in every locality and in every Christian congregation. It is founded on the belief in our Lord's continued interest in the health of the body as well as the salvation of the soul; and for the purpose of bringing about a restoration of the gift of healing universally practiced in the early Church. It aims to deepen the spiritual life and impart strength to body and soul by prayer and intercession.

An earnest appeal is made, therefore, for at least two clergymen in each city, who will be willing to extend such ministry, sympathetically and *in faith*, as it may be sought by the faithful who appeal for it. There are lambs and sheep of the flock desiring to be fed. What can be said when the shepherd's hands are empty?

The fact that a society is actively engaged in reviving this ministry of healing is, in itself, a matter worthy of serious notice. Bishop Brent touches upon the principle in his recent book, "The Revelation of Discovery," when he says: "Guilds

and societies in the Church are an admission of weakness not less than a means of strength. They are a declaration that the family character of the parish is incomplete and must be supplemented by artificial aids; and the many are failing to recognize a general duty, which is thus thrust upon a few." So this principle may be applied to the Church at large with respect to the ministry of healing. It is therefore a matter of deep import that, at this time, clergy should become identified with the movement, and actively interested in its extension.

There are many devout Christians who are not at all sure as to their pastor's view or belief, and where this does exist it should be known with no element of uncertainty whatsoever. Faithful ministers thus interested would not only increase the value of their service to their people ten-fold, but would have a very marked effect upon their brother clergy, who were indifferent on the subject.

When the majority of all God's ministers are converted to this ministry, then the Society of the Nazarene will automatically cease to exist. Until such time it must go forward in its work of re-

storing the complete ministry of the Master, and showing forth the undying character of His commission to heal all manner of sickness in His Name, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

PART II

CHAPTER I

THE GREAT COMMISSION

IN the commission to labor for Him and extend His work, Our Lord in every instance, in the command to preach, included also the command to heal. From a study of these commissions taken from all the Gospels we find that the command embraced three distinct duties: (1) preaching, (2) healing, and (3) casting out of unclean or evil spirits. The latter two were of course closely connected, as a demented or possessed person was in most instances in bodily as well as in mental and spiritual distress. The fact to be noted as most important is that equal value is accorded to each duty. The healing of the sick is as vital a part of the work in extending the kingdom of God as preaching the word. When one reads the words of these commissions carefully, it is startling how this fact will be forced upon

the mind. It was certainly in our Lord's original plan. As to how far we have authority to modify this will be considered later. The texts are presented here and a close perusal of them will be found helpful.

"And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power (authority) over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease . . . and as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely, ye have received, freely give." St. Matt. x:1, 7, 8.

"And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sickness and to cast out devils." St. Mark III:14, 15.

A repetition of the commission in slightly different form is also found in St. Mark and mentions the apostolic custom of anointing the sick with oil: "And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits . . . and they went out, and preached that men should repent, and they cast out many devils and anointed

with oil many that were sick, and healed them." St. Mark VI:7, 12, 13.

"Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases, and he sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. . . . And they departed and went out through the towns, *preaching* the gospel *and* healing everywhere." St. Luke IX:1, 6.

How completely woven together were these two duties embraced in His command to the apostles is shown in the manner in which they were used in His own ministry. St. Luke records it in the same chapter: "And the people, when they knew it, followed him; and he received them and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing." St. Luke IX:11.

It was this continued exercise of the twofold ministry that led people generally to expect it. The testimony on this point is indisputable: "And he came down with them and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to *hear him, and to be healed* of their diseases; and they that were vexed with unclean

spirits; and they were healed." St. Luke VI:17, 18.

When the seventy disciples were sent out they received the same charge.

"And into whatsoever city ye enter and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you; and *heal the sick* that are therein, and *say* unto them, The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." St. Luke x:8, 9.

The commission is included in the final charge given to the disciples just prior to His ascension. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature . . . and these signs shall follow them that believe . . . they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover." St. Mark xvi:15.

The authenticity of the last verse of St. Mark's Gospel has been disputed. Even should it ever be proved that it is not part of the original text, it is valuable in that it gives a very early view of our Lord's commission to His disciples and that it did include the ministry of healing.

The other Gospels, however, contain commissions given by our Lord during the period between the resurrection and the ascension. While they do not mention the healing of the sick, the omission is by no means evidence that it was not

to constitute a vital part of the ministry. The peculiar character of those final commissions, on the contrary, furnishes ample grounds for belief that this ministry was to be included and that it was so understood.

In St. Matthew the commission is as follows: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them unto the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe *all things* whatsoever I *commanded* you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." St. Matt. XXVIII:18.

The commission is recorded by St. Luke, partially in indirect discourse, and in the third person, but it is indelibly stamped with the character of a direct commission.

"And he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in

the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." St. Luke xxiv:46 ff.

St. John reports a commission totally unlike any of the others: "Then said Jesus unto them, Peace be unto you. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." St. John xx:21.

It is interesting to observe that St. Matthew stresses the sacrament of baptism, while St. John omits any reference to it and confines himself to the great sacrament of absolution. St. Luke does not mention either, but at the same time he certainly included both sacraments, indirectly in the record of the commission to preach *repentance* and *remission of sins*.

To hold that the authority and power to heal the sick was not included in the direct commission to the disciples during the post-resurrection period, simply because it is not mentioned in the *final* words given by three of the Gospel writers, or because of the uncertainty as to that section of St. Mark's Gospel, wherein it is mentioned,

is unwarranted and will not bear the test of *comparison* and *history*.

By comparison we see that although the final commission to baptize is found only in St. Matthew and, strangely enough, also, in the disputed section of St. Mark, there has never been a question raised anywhere, at any time, about the obligation of the ministry with regard to this sacrament. At first glance one perhaps does not notice that this commission is not confined to the performance of the one sacrament of baptism, but is to include many other duties. Following, or accompanying baptism, they are told to teach them "to observe *all things, whatsoever I commanded you.*" Certainly the commands of our Lord included the ministry of healing. As it was so closely identified with all of their *original commissions*, it would be impossible for them to think that it was to be discontinued.

As a matter of fact, the *history* of the early Church proves conclusively that it was in no way discontinued by the apostles and other disciples. On the contrary, it occupies a prominent and continuous place in their ministry. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of St. Paul, and the Epistle of St. James offer incontestable testi-

mony to this effect. The acts of healing all manner of sicknesses, including the lame and the blind, were most numerous, and this ministry was so clearly recognized as belonging to the work of the apostles, that "they brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by, might overshadow some of them." And in Acts v:16 we read: "There came also a multitude out of the cities round about, unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one."¹

The Remission of Sins

There has been little or no question raised with regard to the authenticity of the commission in St. John's Gospel which has to do with the remission of sins. It is practically the most comfortable doctrine possessed by the Church; and Christians everywhere admit it and accept it, although among some of the Protestant sects there may be raised a question as to the manner of its exercise.

The fact remains that this commission is universally recognized as authoritative in all branches

¹For an account of this ministry in the early Church see "The Revival of the Gift of Healing."

of the Catholic Church: Roman, Eastern and English. Even by those priests and ministers who neglect to use it regularly, as exercising the "power of the keys," it is held as a divine commission and accepted as such in the sacrament of ordination. It is the most wonderful gift that can possibly be possessed by man, for it confers upon him the authority and power, not only to lead a straying soul into union with God, but to convince that soul of the reality of its reconciliation by words spoken in the name of Christ, which are unmistakable in their truth. It is at once the most delicate and most beautiful of all human relationships in that it illustrates, visibly, an operation of God upon the human soul through the medium of one who represents and speaks for His Son.

Yet, notwithstanding all this, many priests who exercise it, and many persons who receive the blessed benefits, look upon it as much less miraculous and less wonderful than the ministry of healing; whereas, the character of the two is exactly the reverse.

Our Lord Himself settled the comparative value of these two acts of ministry in the exposition of his God-like power to pronounce the

forgiveness of sins upon the young man sick of the palsy. When he read the thoughts of the Jews who considered He was committing blasphemy, He said: "For whether *is easier* to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, arise, take up thy bed and walk?"

To demonstrate that He considered the latter act the easier of the two, He immediately exercised His ministry of healing and restored the young man's health. It was not an arbitrary act to prove His Divine power of forgiveness. The young man *had shown repentance*; otherwise our Lord would not have pronounced forgiveness of his sins. The healing was natural, and followed in ordinary course. The incident, however, revealed the relative value of the two acts, and Christ's estimate of them must be accepted by those who follow Him unreservedly. Therefore, those who either confer or receive the benefits of absolution have no excuse for neglecting, in any way, the ministry of healing by the laying on of hands or anointing; for they are manifestly engaged in an act which is *far more difficult in every way*, according to the words of the Master, whom they mean to obey.

We are inclined to take it for granted that He

referred only to His own power when He said, "Whether is easier;" whereas He was demonstrating it as a principle within human control. He was going to bestow that same power to forgive sins upon men, and He intended them to understand the principle underlying the ministry as they, too, would perform it. Therefore, accepting His valuation, we conclude:

It is easier to heal the sick than to cure the soul by pronouncing absolution.

First, because the natural instinct of man leads him toward the first, and it requires much training and guidance to prevail upon him to accept the latter. Nearly every one seeks health and if ill, desires earnestly to become cured; but not every one desires to seek forgiveness. Many charming sinners refuse to acknowledge there is any need of forgiveness of God; but one seldom finds a sick man who refuses to admit that his health is impaired, and that he needs healing. Many persons evade absolution. Every sane sick person seeks healing and will do anything to obtain it.

Secondly, we find this valuation stands, because the healing of the body is such an obvious process, and is in such harmony with all that we know of

what we call "natural laws." Our investigation of these laws reveals the glorious fact that the underlying intention or "force" is always operating toward man's physical health. Modern research has proven that the blood has hosts of tiny warriors which, upon the entrance of disease germs, give battle to them with all the intelligence of a well directed army. Many serious diseases, among them tuberculosis and typhoid fever, are now treated by great physicians without any drugs at all. Nutrition and fresh air are practically the only prescriptions written by these wise doctors who thus give what they call "nature" a chance. Science in all its departments is corroborating the fact of the drugless cure; the cure perfected by nature's healing properties. Science is not only explaining it but recommending it. Cheerfulness and hope are admitted by physicians to be most important factors in the recovery of a patient. These emotions produce certain beneficial chemical changes in tissue which contribute greatly toward recovery. Modern psychologists state that no higher form of cheerfulness and hope can be found than that which is based on true Christianity.

That beneficent power working with more than

human intelligence, which science designates as natural law, we prefer to call God; and we trace in that healing His laws in operation.

On the other hand, there is nothing obvious in the forgiveness of sins. It is a hidden operation, a mystery of mysteries, and the scientist or naturalist has no place for it in his moral plan. It is a process belonging primarily to the spiritual kingdom. Man's body may be affected by it and indeed receive glorious benefits, but it is so helped only indirectly. The gift is imparted directly to the soul. It belongs to the realm of the spirit and the materialist says there is no spiritual realm, notwithstanding the fact that some men of science are conducting investigations with the hope of establishing that premise.

The morally wise scoff at repentance as a morbid emotion leading one to sadness, failing to detect in it a sane and sensible reality emerging into a wondrous joy. The world says an appeal for forgiveness is an evidence of weakness, whereas those who pass through the experience realize it as an exhibition of courage and that it endues them with a still greater strength. It is an operation of the divine spirit of God upon the divine spirit within man; it represents a fusion of the

two worlds in the human heart. It is foreign to worldly standards of thinking and living. The world resents it in every aspect. Even within the Christian Churches there are thousands of men and women living in a state of unforgiveness and carrying burdens of unforgiven sin. They know it, yet pride prevents them from seeking and receiving forgiveness.

In innumerable instances it has been found that an impenitent heart and unforgiven sin has been the one serious obstacle in the healing of a patient.

And so the forgiveness of sins is harder, *in approach*, as well as *in execution*, than the healing of the body. Notwithstanding this almost self-evident fact it is not uncommon to find those who practice confession regularly, both as confessor and penitent, who stumble at any suggestion that the ministry of healing may still be exercised. Their difficulty is, of course, due to the false idea of theology with regard to suffering and the will of God, and the stressing of the spiritual side. They should be the very ones who, having accepted the *greater* miracle, should have no difficulty whatsoever in accepting to the fullest the *lesser* miracle of healing. If it is our Lord's lov-

ing presence that makes possible the continued forgiveness of sins, it is the same presence that bestows the power to heal. It was He Himself who placed the comparative value upon each gift. Those who follow Him should be content to accept His valuation.

The power to heal is just as present and just as near as the power to forgive sins. It is man alone who deprives himself of the gift by his lack of faith and consequent failure to appropriate it.

CHAPTER II

THE PERMANENCY OF THE COMMISSION

WE have seen that this commission to heal was undoubtedly included in the commissions given to apostles and disciples. That it was intended by our Lord to be permanent, we have every reason to believe. The belief is substantiated by facts. To state that the power of healing was withdrawn after the *apostolic age* is to ignore and contradict the history of Christianity. The fact that thousands of people in Christian lands have denied the necessity of baptism; that thousands of Christians neglect the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; that many of the clergy and protestant ministers and thousands of Christians ignore the sacrament of Penance, and never resort to the confession of sins in any form, does not destroy the character of those sacraments, nor affect the *permanency* intended for them in the mind of our Lord for the good of his people. *Those who fail to practice them are the losers.*

That is exactly the situation with regard to the ministry of healing. The person who does not believe in anointing on the ground that it is a Roman Catholic practice, has no foundation for his contention; first, because the sacrament, as used in the Roman Church to-day, has no semblance to the original anointing, which was used for the restoration of the health of the patient, not the preparation of the soul for death. Secondly, he presents nothing more than a prejudice for his neglect of an original practice.

Again, when anointing or laying on of the hands is neglected on the ground that this matter belongs to the medical world and not to the Church, one of the fundamental principles of Christianity is ignored, and a Divine Commission, bestowed by the Master and never withdrawn, is *rejected*. This rejection is not based on any reasonable ground that there is no longer any demand for it, or that the practice has outgrown its usefulness and does not work. In the last analysis the reason for rejection may be traced to the failure of the organized Church to preserve this treasure and the lack of faith on the part of the individual disciple.

Of what possible value is our claim to apostolic

succession if we are neglectful of apostolic practices!

When Christians of any sect declare themselves to be followers of Jesus of Nazareth and His teachings, they assume a belief which obligates them to the practice of bodily healing by faith as truly as to the cure of souls.

That the healing ministry was considered a permanent part of our Lord's commission may be clearly shown by the records of the Church for several centuries. The evidence by no means ends with the Epistles nor with the passing of the apostles. It was unquestionably the mind of the early Church that the gift of healing was among the spiritual gifts imparted at ordination and was so understood and used. The Rev. F. W. Puller¹ has made an exhaustive and reverent study of this aspect of the question. "The connection of the *charisma* of healing with the ministerial office is emphasized in the liturgies. There is a prayer that God would bestow the *charisma* of healing on the person who is being ordained, in the forms for ordaining bishops and priests, in the canons of Hippolytus, and in the Nestorian and Armenian ordinals, and also in the form for ordaining priests

¹ "Anointing of the Sick," p. 291. (S. P. C. K.)

in the Apostolic Constitutions, and in the form for ordaining bishops in the Syrian Jacobite Ordinal."

In the *Apostolic Constitution* the reference is as follows: "Let a presbyter be ordained . . . if in all things he be pious, quiet so that being (thus) he may be counted worthy of the gift of healing." Father Puller points out that the Roman Pontifical refers to it and that in all the forms for ordaining Exorcists through which practically all priests have to pass, there occurs the petition that the ordained may be "a physician of God's Church, worthy of approval, confirmed by the possession of the grace of healing (*gratia curationem*) and of heavenly power."

He concludes that "if the *charisma* of healing belongs to the gift imparted in ordination, there is no necessity for it to be explicitly mentioned by the bishop when he ordains; but the fact that it is mentioned in some ordinals bears witness to a widespread belief in the connection between the *charisma* and the ministerial office, a belief in which I am inclined to share."

In view of the foregoing evidence, therefore, one has no more authority to discard the commission to heal than he has to neglect the commission

to baptize, or to participate in the Lord's Supper. This commission cannot be viewed as a separate part of the work. It is so involved in the original commission that its separation means a serious sundering which impairs the value of the whole.

The Double Value of the Original Commission

Let us look back then for a moment upon the character of the original commission. To the twelve apostles and to the seventy disciples the thought was the same. To the former it was said: "And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God and heal the sick." To the latter he said: "Heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

The ministry of healing and the cure of sickness, although merciful and beneficial in character, was not to be an end in itself. It was, first, to be the means to an end, which was to bring the kingdom of God to man and thus enroll people into that kingdom; and secondly, it was to constitute the blessing that would be bestowed upon those who became members.

It is certainly understood that the apostles were

to preach and teach repentance, but it is more than a *coincidence* that the Master connects the *healing ministry* with this extension of the kingdom. He makes it, in fact, *the principal method by which the kingdom was to be introduced*. "Heal the sick and say, The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

The Vital Relation

When we examine this ministry, in actual operation, we can see the *vital relation* between the two.

First, the curative acts were not performed merely by kind hearted men, possessed of certain therapeutic powers, but by men who laid no claim to personal power, but attributed the healing to the person of a Living Lord, one Jesus of Nazareth, whom they served. In several instances they were explicit in denying any personal power and at the same time zealous in pointing out the source of the power by which they were enabled to act. *They were but the instruments of the Master*. Acts III:12; IV:12, 30; IX:34.

This was also made especially clear in the refusal of St. Paul and St. Barnabus to receive di-

vine honor after the healing of the cripple at Lys-tra, when they restrained the people, saying, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you." Acts XIV:14. They were men who used no personal gift, or magnetism or trained therapeutic accomplishments; nothing indeed but the gift of healing, bestowed upon them as a part of their ministry and *in which they believed*. Every act accomplished by them should be duplicated to this day by ministers who hold a similar faith.

One may possess this gift, but to fail to believe in it and to hesitate to exercise it, is practically equal to non-possession. It is a talent buried. Those who believed they possessed this gift as a part of their ministry could say: "Such as I have give I unto you." They possessed a divine power which they were enabled to impart.

Secondly: The cures required *upon the part of* the recipient, *a faith* in the power of their living Lord and a desire to accept the blessing thus offered by the messengers of God, in the Name of His Son Jesus.

There was no arbitrary or mechanical healing, irrespective of faith, nor can there be a repetition of spiritual healing in this day, without a faith

on the part of the recipient and a genuine desire to accept the full teaching of our Lord.

This astounding revelation of God's will for the health of His people certainly produced a deep repentance and inspired a still deeper desire for perfect union with God. Thus this ministry of healing could well result in bringing the Kingdom of God, in its highest aspect, "nigh unto mankind."

Nor was this drawing nigh of the kingdom confined only to those of the sick, who received the direct benefit of healing. After the healing of the lame man by St. Peter and St. John, we are told that many of them which heard the word believed, as a direct result of the miracle. "And the number of them was about five thousand." And upon St. Philip's visit to Samaria, we read that "the people, with one accord gave heed unto those things which he spake, *hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.*" Acts VIII:6.

Thus the ministry of healing is far more extensive in its influence than merely upon the person cured, or even his immediate family!

What an inspiration this must have been to early believers, that through the operation of our Lord's healing power upon them, *others* were

brought into union with God. And thus in the hearts of those who *needed no physical benefits* were produced the faith and repentance necessary for membership in the Kingdom. These were, as a matter of fact, the only requisites then, and they are the only requisites now. The example of Christ's life with respect to this double work is so obvious that to one who has caught the vision it seems incredible that all should not embrace it. "God sent His Son into the world that the world should be saved through Him (St. John III:17) and His life plainly showed that that salvation was intended to reach and to bless the bodily as well as the spiritual life. Nowadays the Church fulfills this part of its duty chiefly through its hospitals and its trained army of Christian doctors and nurses. But this does not preclude in special circumstances and in certain persons a more direct gift of healing after the manner of Christian miracles." ²

The early Christians felt this to be a distinct part of their duty and modern Christians can aim at nothing less without losing a valuable part of the full Christian message. The same author, an

² Wigram. "The Healing Christ." (Nisbet & Co., London.)

English clergyman, has presented this vision in a most appealing and convincing manner:

"We are sent, as Christ was sent. He was God's Healing Christ. We are sent, as Christ was sent. He was God's Apostle: we are His apostles (Heb. III:1; St. John XVII:18, Greek). And there is yet another word which is almost common to us and to Him, as though to indicate how strictly our work in the world is the sequel of His own. It is the word 'Christ' itself. In the Old Testament this word is actually used of God's chosen people. 'Touch not Mine anointed ones—My 'Christs'—and do My prophets no harm' (Ps. CV:15). And if in the New Testament the word has acquired too sacred an association to be employed concerning any beside One, yet the disciples soon begin to be styled 'Christians' (Acts XI:26; I Pet. IV:16), and they quickly adopt for themselves as a term of high honor this intended sobriquet of reproach, for they know they are indeed God's anointed ones. St. John reminds us that we have received a 'Chrism' from the Holy One (I John II:20, Greek). . . . The very same word is used of Christians as of Christ. 'As for you, the anointing—the chrism—which ye received of Him abideth in you.' (I St. John

II:27). This anointing or chrism is indeed the Holy Ghost Himself, as is clearly indicated by the latter half of this same verse when compared with St. John XIV:26. He descended upon the Lord Jesus without measure, and abode upon Him; and that abiding presence constituted Him the Christ, anointed, as we have before seen, to preach good tidings to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind (St. Luke IV:18). He descends in measure on each of the faithful followers of Jesus, and abides upon them; and this abiding presence constitutes them also as christs, anointed to imitate, according to their several measures, the very works of the Master, whose Name they bear.

“Well may we take to heart, as we contemplate our past failures adequately to represent Christ to the world that needs Him, the impatient exclamation of St. Paul to the Galatians, ‘My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you’ (Gal. IV:19). Well may we pray to be ourselves transformed into His image, so that through the Lord the Spirit, we may far more perfectly reflect the glory of His wonderful life of healing love.”

CHAPTER III

THE PENALTY OF REJECTION

EVEN in those early days of fresh faith—faith that was burning with a wondrous divine fire—there were some who did not believe; some who would not accept the message of the Kingdom, some who refused to see. They were those who said: “These men are fanatics, disturbers. What they are doing and proposing is contrary to our religious forms and customs. They may perform startling cures but they are in league with the devil. They are dangerous men.”

Our Lord foresaw this condition and provided for it in His original instructions. His messengers were not to be discouraged or dismayed at any such reception. They were to go their ways; they were to wipe the dust of the city off against them and say, “Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” St. Luke x:11.

The repetition of the presentation of the “King-

dom of God" as being their sole purpose, is not without its significance in this connection. He Himself had been rejected in certain cities in spite of the fact that He had performed many mighty works before them. These same works performed in the heathen cities of Tyre and Sidon would have brought the people to repentance. (St. Luke x:12 ff.) Jesus relates this personal experience of what seems like His failure, under certain conditions, immediately after He has given the disciples the double commission and has warned them of the obstacles and resistance they are likely to encounter. This, however, does not detract from their enthusiasm in their mission, nor neutralize in any way the great power they are to exercise. On the contrary, His warning *reveals the true character* of this great gift of healing, and the power of His Name, *by showing that it is not irresistible*. The power of choice is to be left entirely to man. There is to be no disturbance of the sovereign gift of free will. Members may be drawn only through invitation, never by compulsion, either through promise of blessing or threats of punishment.

Thus were the disciples informed at the very beginning of the work of the nature of their

power. Thus they understood that the rejection of the ministry of healing, and the refusal to place any faith in their cures, meant in many instances and to many people the rejection of the Kingdom of God, which by virtue of these acts had been brought so nigh unto them.

The apostles went forth to proclaim the Kingdom of God, laden with gifts, which they were enabled to bestow upon individuals as evidences of God's will for His people, and as pledges of their authority. Yet although they could offer blessings and benefits both bodily and spiritual, men and women were to be permitted to retain the liberty of choice. The condition with respect to this point exists to-day as it did then. Men and women are still accorded the privilege of refusing from God and God's messengers even a blessing. Sad indeed must it be to those who refuse it, to know that in so doing they have rejected that which signified a special approach of the Kingdom of God in their direction. Sadder indeed are those conditions where we discern that those who are the accredited messengers of God, are totally ignorant and neglectful of this vital half of their message and ministry.

We believe and we feel that it has been clearly

demonstrated in the preceding pages that the original commission was intended by our Lord to be permanent. We believe that it should be in operation by all those who call themselves Christians everywhere.

Every minister, truly called and ordained, possesses this gift and power; and if he does not exercise it he is permitting to lie fallow a mighty weapon in his spiritual accouterment; and all because of his lack of faith.

There are others, however, laymen and women, outside of the ministry, who undoubtedly possess the gift of healing in a special sense, as referred to by St. Paul and as recorded all through the early centuries, and who are not exercising it because of the failure of the Church to keep this ministry alive. Those who to-day are noted as healers and practitioners in the Christian Science body possibly possess qualifications for this ministry, which should have been given its proper place within the Church and as a part of her divinely commissioned work.

Members in every congregation that accepts Jesus of Nazareth as its leader, should accept the ministry of healing as naturally as they accept the spiritual teaching and should ask for it for their

families and friends, as well as for themselves, in quiet trust and hope. Christians everywhere should bring to an end the practice of sending for the minister only when all hope is gone, with the idea that it is his duty then to prepare the soul for its passing. Not until this unwelcome conception of the ministry of healing is swept away entirely can Christianity be said to have come to its own.

To many who are sick in body and who are weary in mind and weak in faith, the revival of this ministry would most surely result in bringing them *into* the Kingdom of God, because it would mean an awakened *faith* in a *Living Christ*. It would mean a *real repentance*; it would thus mean a vital, a real, union with God, such as they had never known. It would be a revelation of God's loving will for man with respect to the blessing of health. Our Lord would come closer to them as they drew nearer to Him, and they would have a real foretaste of His love, as they experienced the power of His blessed healing presence.

The healing of the body is one of the unmistakable, inseparable signs of the Kingdom, instituted as a sign and a pledge, by the founder of the Kingdom. Until we accept this great truth,

in its fullness we cannot pray aright that portion of our Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom come— Thy will be done on earth——"

To-day there are many who think they are in the Kingdom, but who have none of its great blessings and none of its joys, simply because of their disregard of, their neglect of, their lack of faith in, the ministry of healing. Christian ministers must be awakened to exercise it, Christian people must call for it. The great double commission stands and will stand as long as faith remains in a Living Christ. We can do nothing less than accept His words:

"Heal the sick and say, The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

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